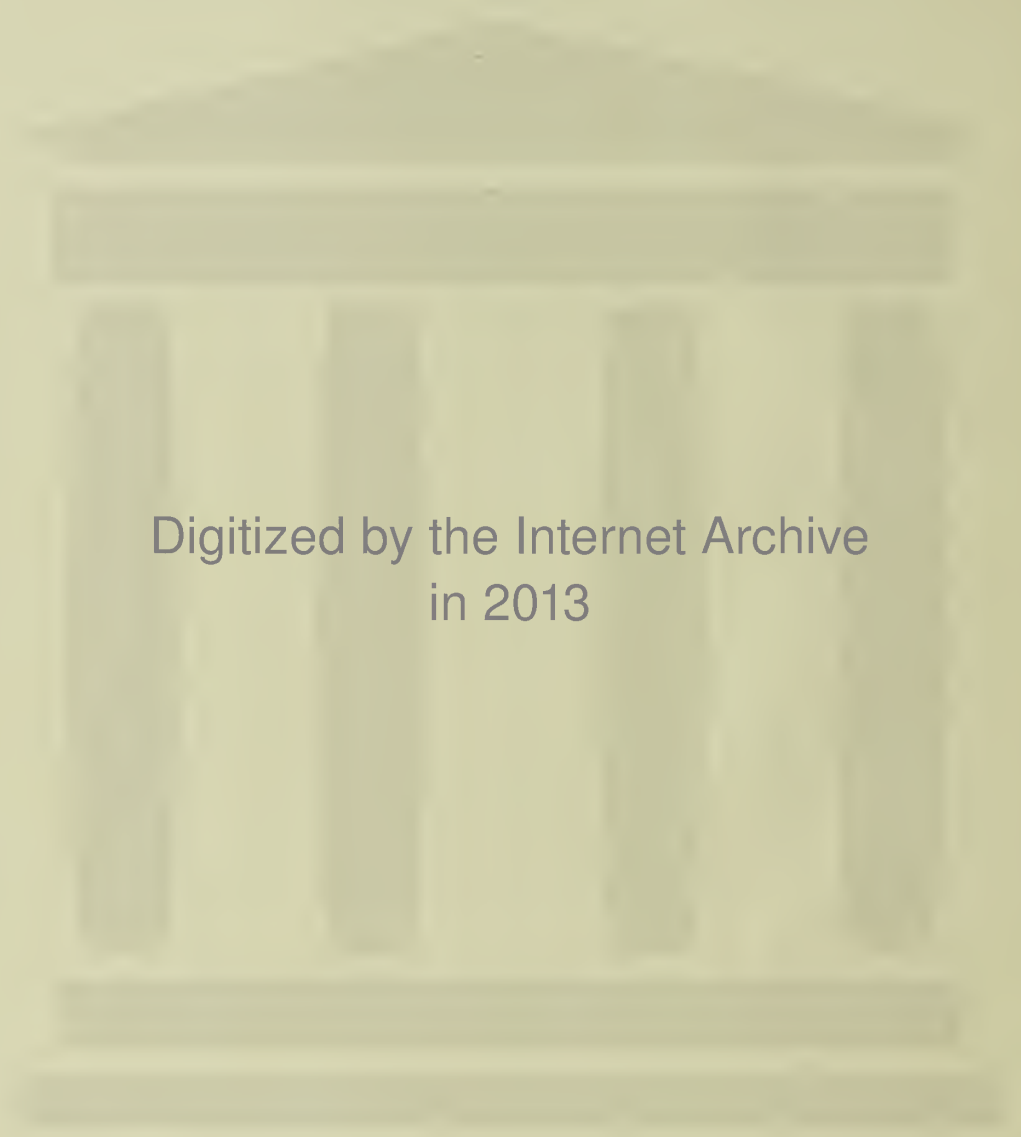

ARMANDO PALACIO VALDES: A CRITICAL STUDY

BY

MANUEL LEON LOPEZ

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THESIS

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I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION BY Manuel Leon Lopez

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Arthur R. Seymour
In Charge of Thesis

Kenneth McKenzie
Head of Department

Recommendation concurred in*

Committee on Final Examination*

*Required for doctor's degree but not for master's

ARMANDO PALACIO VALDÉS: A CRITICAL STUDY

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BIOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

Novel writing in Spain, which had been languishing under the deadening influence of a decadent romanticism, took on new life with the appearance, in 1849, of Fernán Caballero's La Gaviota, followed in quick succession by other novels and short stories by the same writer. She had introduced into Spain for the first time, after a long period of confusion and stagnation, a new point of view in fiction. Fired with the enthusiasm awakened by the unpretentious, quaint life of the Andalusian country-side, and reinforced by trained and natural powers of observation, she borrowed from the common but highly interesting incidents of that life, the material with which to weave the simple plots of her charming stories. Imagination had thus begun to give way to observation, romanticism to the realistic point of view.

Rather the harbinger than the founder of the new movement Caballero represents that transitional stage in Spanish literary history which was to usher in the revival of modern fiction. The artistic impulse of the Spanish genius, grown tense under the accumulated impressments of constant politico-religious strife, gave vent to its latent powers at the magic touch of a group of writers who almost simultaneously vied with each other in offering to the public novels which met in every case with enthusiastic reception, within and without national boundaries. The question as to who was the real founder of the nineteenth century renaissance of Spanish fiction is only a chronological one. Thus Pereda is the beginner because he happened to write earlier, but Valera, Pérez Galdós, Pardo Bazán, and Palacio Valdés divide equally the honor of vindicating for Spain, in the latter half of the past century, the best literary traditions of

her golden age. The atmosphere was already surcharged with the new spirit which had been wafted into Spain by the irresistible, energizing currents from France, Italy, and England. That spirit needed only to embody itself, so to speak, in such personalities as were capable and ready to absorb it and assimilate it, each contributing out of his own individuality, according to his inheritance and his immediate environment, now the incomparable human sympathy and fervent traditionalism of a Pereda, now the richness and subtlety and grace of a Valera, now the force and the painstaking erudition of a Pérez Galdós, now the colorful boldness of a Pardo Bazán, or now the inimitable humor and deep human sympathy of a Palacio Valdés. So each of these and all of these may be regarded as the leaders, according as each responds to the particular emphasis which a class of readers gives to his works, or according as the writers, taken as a group, represent multiform phases of one single literary manifestation.

An eminent Spanish critic[1] has pointed out that there are at present three co-existing generations of novelists in Spain. The first generation is represented by the masters already mentioned, who, though still active, properly belong to the nineteenth century. To the second generation belong those who began their literary careers when the older group was still at its zenith of literary production. The most conspicuous figure of this second generation is Blasco Ibáñez. Finally, the third generation is represented by such writers as Valle-Inclán, Ricardo León, Martínez Sierra, Martínez Ruiz, Pío Baroja, and the many-sided Unamuno. These three generations have been influenced in the main by a realism which ranges all the way from the native picaresque of the seventeenth century to the French naturalistic tendencies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, according to the indi-

1. E. Gómez de Baquero: Novelistas Españoles Modernos, in Cultura Española, 1908.

vidual inclinations and tastes of each writer. For all the divergence in application and outlook, however, the writers are distinctly peninsular in their general viewpoint. This particularism has in general prevented them from being more widely known--as they richly deserve to be--outside their own country. As a matter of fact, it is this very peninsular flavor that lends to the Spanish fiction of today that interest of novelty, that originality of treatment and setting, which should strongly appeal to the foreigner. In the words of Aubrey F. G. Bell[1], "since 1874, scarcely a year has passed without producing a Spanish novel that deserves a high rank in literature." Not without excuse one of the Spanish authors themselves[2] declares, half facetiously, half pathetically, that "if Spain possessed as many ships and cannon as England, France, or Germany, her literature would be considered the first in the world."

Armando Palacio Valdés is a conspicuous exception to this foreign neglect, and probably for this reason he is not as justly appreciated at home as other writers of greater peninsular reputation though of inferior merit. It will now be my purpose to confine myself to a critical study of this most Spanish yet most universal of contemporary novelists.

The native home of Armando Palacio Valdés is in the village of Entralgo, in the province of Asturias, in the mountain district of northwestern Spain. Here his parents possessed a country-house and surrounding estate. His father, D. Silverio Valdés, was an advocate by profession, and his mother descended from an old land-holding family. D. Silverio was a man of emotional temperament, was endowed with much imagination, and had an extraordinary talent for story-tell-

1. Aubrey F. G. Bell: The Magic of Spain, London, 1912; p. 191.
2. A. Palacio Valdés: Interview, in La Esfera, I, Jan. 10, 1914; p. 2.

ing, qualities which rendered him socially attractive. The great novelist, with becoming modesty, has said of his father that if he possessed but half of his father's imagination he should be a good novelist.

Soon after Armando's birth, which occurred on the fourth of October, 1853, the Valdés family moved to Avilés, a coast-town of Asturias, where most of the mother's relatives resided. They alternated thereafter their residence between that town and Entralgo, where they passed the summer. Young Valdés, under the loving care of exceedingly good and tolerant parents, lived in Avilés a free and happy childhood, and, like so many coast-town boys, grew extraordinarily fond of sea-life. His early years thus spent helped to implant in his impressionable soul that ineffaceable love for the village-folk ways and their poetic surroundings which fifty years later he was to sing with such emotional intensity in that mock-heroic "novel-poem" of his, La Aldea Perdida.

At the age of twelve, Armando was sent to Oviedo, the capital of the province, where he pursued his secondary studies under the care of a paternal uncle. His school days at Oviedo were full of interesting experiences, which furnished rich material to his keen, observant nature for several of the best products of his pen. At school he showed intelligence and faithfulness not exempt from a goodly dose of the mischievous vivacity of youth--qualities which soon attracted the friendship of other eager classmates with literary proclivities. He showed from the beginning greater preference for philosophical and political subjects, but his association with his literary young friends turned his interest also to literary studies--an influence which later proved to have determined his ultimate career.

At the age of seventeen, after terminating his secondary

studies at Oviedo, young Valdés went to Madrid ostensibly to prepare himself for a professorship of political economy, a career which was then the height of his ambition. He accordingly devoted himself with enthusiasm to the study of jurisprudence and social science, giving little time to the cultivation of literature. Soon afterwards, he was admitted to membership in the famous scientific and literary club, the Ateneo de Madrid. The young law student eagerly availed himself of its library, and became so actively associated with its labors that, before the end of his course in the university, he was elected first secretary of the section of moral and political sciences in that institution.

After his admission to the bar, he continued his preparation for a professorship of civil law or of political economy. He published at this time several articles on religious, philosophical and political subjects which, attracting the attention of the proprietor of La Revista Europea, earned for the young lawyer-philosopher, at the age of twenty-two, the editorship of that periodical, then the most important scientific and literary publication in Spain. There was no indication so far that the young editor was to turn to literary pursuits, but desiring to make the publication more interesting and attractive, and prompted at the same time by an irresistible impulse to give literary expression to the latent fund of humor which the political and literary life of Madrid suggested to his keen powers of observation, he began to write humorous portraits of orators, poets, and novelists. This new activity revived his earlier literary inclinations, with the result that at the end of three years he severed his connections with the periodical, in order to devote his future labors entirely to the writing of fiction.

His articles were collected and published in three sepa-

ate volumes, of which Los Oradores del Ateneo and Los Novelistas Españoles appeared in 1878, and Nuevo Viaje al Parnaso appeared in 1879.[1] In 1882, Valdés published, in collaboration with his friend and countryman, Leopoldo Alas ("Clarín"), La Literatura en 1881, critical studies of their literary contemporaries, in which are set off in sharp contrast the two kinds of humor that separated the literary career of the two writers, otherwise inseparable: the frankly satirical, uproarious irony of "Clarín" versus the half grave, poignant, delightfully subtle and more effective humor of Palacio Valdés.

The brief but important period in which Palacio Valdés essayed through criticism his humor and his observant faculties, may be considered a period of preparation for the larger field of fiction. He had already written Crotalus Horridus, a tale published in 1878, in La Revista de Asturias. In 1881, he went to his native village, where he wrote his first important novel, El Señorito Octavio. In spite of its being the work of a novice, this novel shows already a surprising grasp of technique. The poignant humor of the erstwhile critic reappears unabated in the budding novelist. The success which met his first effort encouraged him to write a second novel, Marta y María, published in 1883. The high standard set by his first novel was surpassed to such a degree that it is doubtful whether many of his later productions ever attained to its level. At a single bound, the fame of the new novel crossed the national lines and, spreading throughout the continent and reaching England, soared across the seas to America, where no less an authority than William Dean Howells[2] made of it the occasion not only of introducing the budding Spanish author to the American public, but also of starting through correspondence a lasting and

1. In 1908, these three volumes were collected into one, and were included in the edition of the author's complete works, under the inclusive title, Semblanzas Literarias.
2. W. D. Howells: Review of Marta y María, in Harper's Mag., 72:811-12.

and admiring mutual friendship. Seldom in the history of literature has an author achieved so early and well-merited a reputation. It showed unquestionable evidence not only of wide reading but also of a discriminating sense of artistic values.

In the summer of 1882, the year in which he wrote Marta y María, the author went to Candás, a small fishing village of Asturias, a few miles west of Gijón. There he met a fifteen-year-old Basque girl, Luisa Maximina Prendes, from the latter town, and whom he lovingly describes in his semi-autobiographical novels, Riverita and Maximina. In 1883, on his thirtieth birthday, the couple became man and wife, and immediately afterwards they established themselves in Madrid. During eighteen short months of an idyllic married life, an angel had come but another had gone: the coming angel was a son, and the departed one--the novelist's wife. Never has misfortune more profoundly affected a man's attitude towards life. He once wrote to a friend:[1] "My married life was the sweetest idyl. The year and a half that it lasted I was happier than the angels in heaven and the immortals of Olympus. Then God called my wife to his choir of seraphim. . I have never known another being who approached her in the virtues of the human soul. Eight years have passed (he was writing in 1893), and at this moment, as I write, my eyes are dimmed with tears. The story of my love may be found in Riverita, and that of my matrimony in Maximina (the second name of my wife). But my Luisa was undoubtedly more perfect than Maximina. When I read in a newspaper of this country these words: 'Where can Mr. Valdés have found so ideal a character as Maximina?' my heart began to throb violently. I have never seen in the heroine of this novel more than a poor copy; the original was vastly superior. My life was completely broken. My son and my art were my salvation.

1. Quoted in Sylvester Baxter's article, A Great Modern Spaniard, Atlantic Monthly, 85:546-567.

But the loss, tinging my life with an indelible cast of melancholy, confirmed me in my philosophical idealism. The man who has received from heaven such a companion can be neither skeptic nor materialistic." These words are wrought in his heart's blood. They explain much of that peculiar optimism which permeates all his work, an optimism tinged with a sweet melancholy which some superficial critics call pessimism, evidently forgetting that a pessimistic idealist is a contradiction in terms.

After the death of his wife, Valdés kept himself aloof from the noise and glamour of literary and political society, and devoted himself to his son and to the continued exercise and enjoyment of his literary labors. From time to time, and at increasingly long intervals, a new book came to remind readers and critics that Palacio Valdés was still very much alive and in the plenitude of his artistic powers. In 1884 appeared El Idilio de un Enfermo, a novel of simple plot and of less power than its predecessor, and Aguas Fuertes, a collection of short stories which Professor Showerman of Wisconsin aptly characterizes as "excellent specimens of artistic precision and restraint."[1] The following year was published José, a delicately vivid portrayal of marine life in an Asturian coast-town. In 1886 and 1887, Riverita and Maximina saw the light. These two novels complement each other through the continuous account of Miguel Rivera, the hero and the more or less veiled personification of the author himself. These books were followed by El Cuarto Poder, published in 1888, and an admirable study of character and social manners, and La Hermana San Sulpicio, the most enjoyable of Valdés's masterpieces, and one of the most original, interesting and entertaining ever written in any literature. The books that followed from now on were more ambitious in

1. Grant Showerman: A Spanish Novelist, in Sewanee Review, 22:385-404.

scope and gloomier in outlook, though they conserved the customary stylistic qualities. These novels are La Espuma and La Fe, both published in 1892, and El Maestrante, published in the following year. After these the author returned to his original optimistic vein in El Origen del Pensamiento (1894), a satire against pedantic science; Los Majos de Cádiz (1896), a lively picture of Andalusian life; La Alegría del Capitán Ribot (1899), "a protest" as the author himself calls it "against the eternal adultery of the French novel"; La Aldea Perdida (1903), an allegorical picture of the baneful effects of modern industry upon the simple and innocent life of an old-fashioned village; and Tristán o el Pesimismo (1906), a fine study in character contrast. In addition to these novels, Valdés has published a few other volumes of sketches and impressions tinged with the same philosophical idealism so much in evidence in most of his novels. Among these are Papeles del Doctor Angélico (1911) and La Guerra Injusta (1917). La España Moderna mentions also La Suegra de Timoteo (1899), a farce written in collaboration with J. Álvarez Mijares.

I have said that Palacio Valdés has not been justly dealt with by the Spanish public, or, rather, by the Spanish critics; it might be more accurate to affirm that the Spanish public, or critics, have not been so quick to see Valdés's position in world literature. Perhaps his very popularity abroad has encumbered his prestige before the conservative Spanish mind, so distrustful of any foreign influence. But even the conservative Spanish mind is not so utterly devoid of that fundamental sense of fairness and impartiality which must eventually bow to true merit, and so, as late as April, 1906, Palacio Valdés was elected to the Royal Spanish Academy, to fill the vacancy left by the death of his famous confrère, D. José María de Pereda. His election to the Spanish Academy coincided with his last and one of the most powerful of

his novels, Tristán o el Pesimismo. "In the same month" Professor Showerman informs us,[1] "his fellow alumni of Oviedo organized a celebration in his honor, and published the letters and speeches then read and delivered."

Palacio Valdés alternates his residence between Madrid, where he passes the winter, and his native province of Asturias and Cap Breton, in France, in his chalet "Marta y María". While in Madrid, he is fond of taking solitary walks in the beautiful park El Retiro, where one can imagine him quietly meditating and musing over the thousand and one little episodes of the life he observes so keenly and so sympathetically. Mr. W. H. Bishop, writing in 1890,[2] describes Valdés as "a man with a bright, winning smile, thoroughly dark, Spanish complexion, and a short, dark beard curling round his face, with rounded, well-fed features." In an interview held in 1902, the well-known Argentine writer, José León Pagano,[3] gives his impressions of Palacio Valdés as a man who has the kindly, sweet complexion suggestive of melancholy, and adds that his clear eyes seem to be veiled by a slight shadow of sadness. Professor Showerman, writing as late as 1914,[4] describes Valdés as a man of "medium size, somewhat slender, and a very slight stoop, and quick and agile in manner." He has "large, open blue eyes and a generous mouth with good teeth, giving instant impression of a personality ingenuous, affable, gentle and sympathetic." William D. Howells, who visited Valdés in 1912, wrote to Professor Showerman, on the occasion of the latter's contemplated visit to the great novelist:"You will find him all you could wish him to be for gentleness and wisdom." Late pictures of Valdés seem to confirm these

1. Op. cit., p. 8
2. William Henry Bishop: A Day in Literary Madrid, in Scribner's, 7: 186-201.
3. José León Pagano: Al través de la España Literaria, two vols., Barcelona, 1915; II, pp. 131-140.
4. Op. cit., p. 8

recorded impressions.

It is curious to note how critics and commentators like to harp on hidden mysteries and sorrows behind great personalities, especially those who, like Valdés himself, have won their laurels chiefly through their masterful handling of humor. Even the great Cervantes has not escaped the piercing eyes and the trembling long fingers of the mystery-seeker. And Mark Twain, that great storehouse of laughter, stands to those same eyes and fingers as a sad philosopher, surreptitiously disguising his hardened pessimism under the loud guffaws of his ostensible humor. In the case of men of letters one has usually direct access to original sources for any right and just comprehension of their innermost spirit. Such is eminently the case with Palacio Valdés. Not only in every page of his novels, but also in his criticisms and his essays the personal note is so evident, so direct and intimate at times, that one comes to understand the man as if passing through his own experiences. The impression left is far from smacking of the mysterious; it is that of the intimate friend who shares with us his most secret confidences. The great novelist himself has written his own biography better and more comprehensively than any critic or commentator could hope to do, and, incidentally, he has given us the clue to the elements of which any true biography must ultimately consist, in the following words, written to an American friend:[1] "Literature continues for me a pleasure, as much when I read as when I write. On the other hand, I avoid the literary life, which here is sad and poor as you can hardly imagine. I believe that the spectacle of the general life of the world in all its rich variety is indispensable to the poet, but I find literary intercourse dismal. I therefore pursue a fairly social activity, but without literary society. I remember only that I am of that sort when I sit at my desk

1. Op. cit., p. 7

to write. The poets and the novelists of the present age do not lead the adventurous and interesting life of our colleagues of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Life, in normalizing itself and becoming more secure, has lost much of its poetry. Our biography is purely internal, and the little that is interesting and external about us costs labor to achieve. What I wish to cenvey to you is that I am much given to the exterior life; it pleases me to live in the greatest number of situations possible. There is hardly a page in my novels that I have not lived or seen enacted before my eyes. Wherever I go I like to dispossess myself of my character and my opinions, that I may assume those of the persons about me. In this way I have at times lived it all: vicious and virtuous, man of studies and man of the world, laborer, mariner, politician, and the rest. But do not believe that I have done this with literary intentions. Nothing of that sort! It is because I have a character but vaguely defined, and therefore enjoy adapting myself to the medium in which I live. The happiest days of my life, apart from the year and a half when I was married, were those which I passed in living the life of a fisherman in a little village on the coast of Asturias. Life is bad and sad; but believe me, my friend, that we make it more sad and bitter by not knowing how to extract the little sugar that it contains." Yes, and it is in this little sugar that the germ of "sweetness and light" is yet to thrive and develop into that larger life which only men like Palacio Valdés can interpret.

One may not expect to continue to enjoy Valdés's further literary productivity, even when his keen perception might extract untold riches out of the moral revolution that is overturning men's minds today; but one is naturally eager to learn something of the expressed attitude of the great novelist on the world conflict. This

explains the intimate satisfaction with which I read his latest, and perhaps last, book, La Guerra Injusta,[1] with the added subtitle, Cartas de un Español. This volume is a collection of letters which he sent to El Imparcial of Madrid, whose editor had invited him to write from Paris, in order to keep the readers of that paper informed on the reactions of the French spirit on the awful trial before it. These letters reflect the same freshness of treatment, delicately tempered by the same idealistic touch, and frequently animated with the same delightful humor that one sees reflected in so many of his novels. At the outset of his first letter he hastens to declare that in the present war he is not neutral because he never was in any dispute he has ever witnessed, and he always took the side he thought was the right one. In the present conflict, he does not hesitate to declare that he took the side of France. In analyzing this feeling, he asked himself if in his favorable attitude towards the Allies some motive might prevail that was not absolutely free from preconception. He found that it was not because of personal sympathy, because he does not harbor any feeling of preference for any country, as he is intimately persuaded that men are fundamentally the same everywhere. "There are not," he says "in Europe at least, superior or inferior races; there are only either men of good faith or of bad." He had no interested motive nor any debt of gratitude to repay, but he found that he was somewhat prejudiced politically, for he could not help admiring England as no other country in the world. He sums up the issues of the world war in these words: "The obstacle on which Humanity has now stumbled is the most difficult that it has encountered in its long journey... If she falls back, we will continue, not ahead, but beside the brute; the law of the strongest will continue to prevail as in the

1. La Guerra Injusta (Cartas de un Español). Bloud & Gay, Barcelona and Paris, 1917.

depths of the ocean. The state of war will perpetuate itself in our planet; hate will establish itself in our hearts; the beast will roar anew from the cannon's mouth. If Humanity leaps to safety, it will fall into the soft lap of the law of Christ, it will forever acquire self-consciousness and will gloriously prosecute her road towards the high destiny which Providence has reserved for it." This is the faith of Palacio Valdés, a faith which he has lived not only through his professions, but through every page of his literary products.

II

PALACIO VALDÉS AS A CRITIC

As has been seen in the preceding chapter, Palacio Valdés began his literary career as a critic. He himself admits, however, that his work as a critic was not of his own choosing. Knowing his creative powers, one may reasonably suppose that his experience as editor of La Revista Europea left him disappointed, a supposition which is corroborated by his own remarks that the noise of the press has always frightened him. During his editorship he was forced to cater to the public demand for criticism of contemporary men and events, especially men, a kind of work always enjoyed by a certain class of persons, very numerous among literary folk, who glory in gossip. As he undertook the distasteful job, Valdés must have realized the risk he incurred in not saying always the just and the sincere thing, of not being at all times impersonal and fair. He must have realized, too, that his interests were those of the seeker after beauty rather than the scavenger of defects and false reputations; and so, through a skilful handling of humor, he succeeded in avoiding personalities, while at the same time vindicating the best interests of art.

His large sense of humanity led him to see in the work of criticism an ever-lurking danger of yielding to personal motives of rivalry or malice, and so, when he had to write in response to public demand, he felt that something not himself impelled him to do so. Not that he desired the pedantry of his time to do its worst with complacent impunity, or that the genuine talent of his time should pass unnoticed and unrewarded, for he was keenly sensitive to both the foibles and the virtues of his fellows; nay, just because of that very sensitiveness he saw deeper into life, and discovered a fundamental idea where the ordinary critic found only a personal friend, a rival,

a patron, or all of them combined. Valdés was, therefore, ill at ease as a critic. As he himself declares, he was condemned to work for an object which was distasteful to him, and he further refers to his book of criticism as "a lamb which I sacrifice to a deity in which I do not believe."[1] With characteristic modesty, he declares that his attitude towards the true artist is not one informed by a feeling of superiority, but one dictated by the most overwhelming sense of inferiority, and then he adds: "If I felt superior or equal to the artist, I would create, not criticize."[2] If he is proud of anything in his work as a critic, he is proud of having understood and enjoyed the beauties created by the poets he has studied. He declares further that, appearances to the contrary, it is much more difficult to be a positive critic than a negative critic, that is, it is much harder to admire than to censure. Any person of mediocre mentality can discuss more or less intelligently and even point out lucidly the defects of a work of art, but even the great Voltaire never could admire Shakespeare, nor could Lope de Vega appreciate Cervantes.

Valdés believes that the task of the true critic is not primarily to search for the defects which all humanly conceived works must perforce contain; it is his task, rather, to point out and to popularize the beauties of every artistic work worth the name, to excite enthusiasm towards them so that they may penetrate deeply into every soul capable of receiving it. Valdés declares himself more convinced of the truth of the paragraphs which perform that task, than of those in which he accepts or rejects aesthetic theories, points out defects, or determines new courses to be followed, because he is always sure of his impressions, but never of his opinions. "I only feel great" he says "when I pay my tribute of admiration to the great."

1. Semblanzas Literarias, p. 250.
2. Ibid., p. 251.

Valdés admits that it is possible that in his criticisms he has been inclined to overpraise, but exaggerated applause is inevitable in dealing with contemporaries with whom the critic is daily hobnobbing in the commerce of life. And he holds it to be noble besides to repay the bards for their efforts to furnish us agreeable moments. He hastens, however, to declare that the affection and respect inspired by the true poets and the indulgence with which their occasional defects may be received, are not to be lightly confused with that pernicious benevolence which praises and applauds everything, from the great works of genius to the stupid performances of the crudest rhymester.[1]

Throughout his critical studies Palacio Valdés shows sound judgment even in the midst of his freedom from restraint. In every line he betrays the instinct of the true artist, ever alive to the element of most fundamental value whatever the form of the work criticized or the period in which it is written. Classification is not paramount with Valdés; but the Idea is all-important. He does not try to judge the works of art with the criterion which the taste of the moment may prescribe. "If we despise", he says,[2] "the works and the writers of romanticism because the taste of our epoch leads us through opposite courses, when other tastes and tendencies supplant these, with what right shall we ask fair judgment for our most cherished poets and our favorite works? Let us think, rather, that Beauty is a maiden serene and august, but very coquettish; and that Art is a youth turbulent and capricious, who courts her unceasingly. Whether he be clad in the Greek tunic, or in the Roman toga, or in the doublet of the middle ages, or in the prosaic frock-coat of our time; whether he wear a wig or long hair, or speak Latin or Swedish, -- if

1. Semblanzas Literarias., p. 254.
2. Ibid, p. 282.

he knows how to be interesting, passionate, and discreet, his courtship will be sure to be rewarded."[1]

Possessed as he was of analytical powers of insight, Valdés found in his academic activities and experiences in Madrid, subjects which re-awakened his earlier literary inclinations. These subjects centered chiefly around the celebrities and near-celebrities of contemporary letters and politics. I say politics because there is hardly a Spanish man of letters who has not been more or less connected with the active political life of his country. How these personalities must have interested the young observer! They were so individual, yet so intimately national, so full of that passionate enthusiasm and that flowery imagination which revealed so many Quijotes disguished as orators, poets, or novelists. For such were they, and such still are, these picturesque leaders of the Spanish people, whether they be as idealistically radical as Castelar, as cosmopolitan as Valera, as romantic as Zorrilla, as versatile as Echegaray, as conservative as Cánovas del Catillo, or as progressive as Canalejas. All these personalities and many less known, the young critic praised or censured, now sympathetically, now ironically and even audaciously, never with rancor or malice, nearly always frankly and fearlessly, and always with a ceaseless flow of the keenest humor. Every page of his critical studies is pregnant with a fresh originality, a flexibility of phrase, a freedom from the usual dogmatic restraints of the traditional critic, which make all his judgments compellingly effective. I have said that Valdés is free from the usual limitations of the ordinary critic. This is true both as to treatment and principle. In treatment, he never indulges in that sameness of style and commonplaceness of phrase which makes the average critical study so tedious, cold and uninteresting. His criti-

1. Semblanzas Literarias, p.282

tical studies read like a collection of delightful informal essays. Of his attitude as a critic he says that he has not placed himself in an exalted position to define and to judge, but that he has merely spoken to the readers as if he met them on the street corner and, while he chatted about literature, gave his opinion as to this or that poet, with the bold frankness and the incoherence of a street conversation.

But the supreme quality of his critical studies is the delightful personal touch which animates them everywhere. In tracing out the sketches of others, he has unwittingly written his own sketch, delicately interwoven in many lines of charming description of personal experiences. Here and there, too, he helps us out with bits of his philosophy of life or his theory of art, tells us naïvely of his likes and dislikes, and treats us to glimpses of his wide reading and information on literary and esthetic subjects. In his criticism of Valera, he regrets that the great novelist should tend to exclude from his novels the joys and the sorrows of humble folk, and respectfully advises him to place us in contact with human beings similar to us. "When the characters become complicated and separated too much from common folk, we begin to regard them with misgivings, we suspect that they do not think such things as the author says, and come to the conclusion that they want to put on airs. That incessant meditation wearies and dries up the soul...." [1] "Mr. Valera, why don't you make us shed a tear? Why should you give us so much light and so little warmth? Look here, Mr. Valera, I once had a sweetheart, who asked me for a novel to read, and I gave her one of yours. A few days later she gave it back to me saying that she had not liked it, which caused me much disappointment because I reflected

1. Semblanzas Literarias, p. 162.

that perhaps the object of my heart was a fool. Then I reflected some more and reached the conclusion that the real fool was myself, that is, yourself, who failed to please her. Because you.... should have known that my sweetheart was going to read your novels. Then why haven't you written them so that she should like them, now, why? Not everybody will understand, but you know perfectly well that there is an esthetic problem behind that question."[1] Thus, in this intimately personal and original way, Valdés knows how to drive his point home to the reader.

In criticizing, say, the poem Idilio, by Núñez de Arce, which deals with a simple theme of growing love, he does not proceed in the regular way to tell us the argument, and then importantly to pass judgment on its merits or demerits. Instead, he announces that Idilio proves once more the little things of life "are often the big things of life, nearly as many times as the big things are the little ones." While we wonder what he is going to say next, he plunges into a welcome digression on the subject of little things and big, as follows: "The small and the great! Who shall dare to decide between the two? While children, we weep over things which cause grown-ups to laugh. Shall it be denied that those childish tears are as sincere and as burning as any tears that the rest of the world sheds? While young we despair or rejoice over things which when old, we look upon with scorn. And if this happens in one single individual, what shall not happen among different men? Ask the shop-keeper across the street what he thinks of the noise of the falling dry leaves in the autumn season. Ask a poet about the rise in the price of cotton. Ask a mother who sees her son depart for war what is her opinion concerning the autonomy of states. Ask a diplo-

1. Semblanzas Literarias, p. 163.

mat now interested he is in that mother's sorrow. The small and the great! Who shall decide between one and the other?"[1]

Valdés was always an enthusiastic admirer of Zorrilla. He takes issue with those critics who reproach the great poet's frequent lapses of style and his lack of poetic conception. In words pregnant with poetic feeling and delicate humor our critic defends him from those who would belittle him. Listen to these words: "The poetry of Zorrilla is a flower of the field, smiling, fresh, soft, fragrant. It was born without a diligent hand's having dropped on the spot a few grains of seed brought especially from Paris. It was born simply because God wanted it to be born for the solace of the traveller who lies down by the wayside of life to rest a moment in the domain of art. The sprinkler of science has not watered it in the morning and in the evening. On windy days it has been innocent of the glass-covered protection of the greehouse; on wintry nights it has had no stove at its side to give it warmth. Sometimes, the poor little flower bent under a snowy burden; at other times it wrinkled up under the burning sun. But as one returned on the following morning, one found it rejuvenated, spreading aromas and scattering reflections around. For Zorrilla is a great poet, in spite of science, in spite of the Academy of the Language, in spite of his crude imitators, and even in spite of himself -- infinitely more of a poet than others who possess much science, much Academy, and few imitators."[1]

We turn now to his more caustic criticisms. It is here that Valdés gives the fullest play to that humor of which I regard him as the greatest master in Spain. At sometime or other in your life you have stood on some high place from where you have surveyed the big throbbing city at your feet. As you have looked down upon the narrow

1. Semblanzas Literarias, 392.

winding streets, and seen the moving black points trudge slowly along the sidewalks like interminable lines of ants on their little errands, have you not been struck by an irresistible desire to smile at the funny little points and the subdued noises, and reflect philosophically on the incongruities of mere perspective? Perspective! There is a world of meaning in that word. Whether you walk in the street among the hurrying crowds or stand solitary and philosophical on the high place, your troubles and ambitions will be in direct ratio to your perspective. In the first case, you are "a man of the world"; in the second case, you are a humorist. So what a man is, is only a matter of perspective. Tell me what you are, and I can guess pretty nearly from what point you are looking. Palacio Valdés is eminently a humorist, or, what amounts to the same thing, he stands spiritually on a high eminence from which he surveys men's minds and men's motives and then laughs heartily at their self-imposed seriousness. Why? Because it is a seriousness that is solely dependent upon its lesser perspective. But this is not saying that Valdés did not take life seriously; it is saying only that he looked at life from a greater perspective than most men. That is why he could afford to laugh at men's foibles and at the same time to refrain from laughing at men. That is why he could be really humorous without being slanderous.

Several quotations will illustrate Valdés,'s characteristic humor. He has previously described D. Manuel de la Revilla as a newly converted skeptic who plunges into all kinds of radical philosophies apparently without reaching definite conclusions, but with very positive ideas about everything. He says of him: "He exhibits himself as one of those men who nobody knows whence they come or whither they are going, but who everybody knows where they are to be found."[1]

1. Semblanzas Literarias, p. 68.

Referring to those critics who are prone to magnify the mistakes and disregard the merit of works of art, Valdés impatiently exclaims: "Defects! Moratín found Hamlet replete with defects. And yet it is infinitely better to be a sleeping Shakespeare than to be always a wide-awake and vigilant Moratín."[1] In regard to Fernán Caballero's fondness for moralizing and for constantly reminding us longingly of the better habits of our God-fearing forefathers, he says: "In order to change our habits of living and return to the usages of our progenitors, it is absolutely necessary that Fernán Caballero guarantee to us: that the priests will always be wise and moderate, and not mean and tricksters, fond of living easy lives; that parents be always tolerant, incapable of opposing the legitimate vocation of their children or of abusing in any way their powers; that the nobles be generous protectors of the weak, not arrogant masters of their resources. And after she has guaranteed us all this, it is also necessary that she indicate to us the means of turning this naughty world into the happy state it craves. Although I presume this enterprise can be effected only by calling a gigantic meeting of all human beings in order to agree among ourselves, after carefully studying every one of the historic epochs, which one we ought to prefer, After this, and after sending word to Paris that instead of high hats only bonnets and slouch hats be manufactured henceforth, and that they get rid at once of their devilish electric lights, then perhaps we could inaugrate anew the golden times of yore. But how about the spirit? Should we order a bonnet for it too?"[2] Valdés is full of these unexpected flashes, which resume at a single decisive stroke the point under consideration.

In his criticism of the novelist D. Manuel Fernández y González,

1. Semblanzas Literarias, p. 398.
2. Ibid, p. 133.

Valdés says of his fondness for the morbidly exciting: "Mr. Fernández y González professed all his life a great horror for the reasonable. So that instead of continuing to study in order to improve, he began to pour forth through his pen a deluge of novels replete with impossible episodes and adventures which produced great disturbance among the dressmakers. From his novels there only remained the names of the personages, their helmets, their lances and their cimitars. Everything else, character drawing, description of manners, verisimilitude of plot, was shipwrecked in a sea of ink." Referring further to Fernández y González's habit of making of bandits noble and generous heroes, he remarks that "it is not absolutely necessary to belong to a bandit's band in order to have an honest and sensible heart."[1]

After eulogizing Canalejas[2] for his gifts as a writer, Valdés denies him the qualities of the true orator. His style is too polished, too elegant, too careful to adapt itself to the passionate imagery in which the true orator excels. He does not make speeches; he dictates them. His orations are not to be listened to; they are to be read. "Canalejas", he continues,"aspires, it seems, to orate the same as he writes. Suppose he succeeds: we will have an elegant, racy writer who redacts his prose with the point of his tongue, but not an orator."[2] It is impossible to convey the idea more clearly and more lucidly.

Much superfluous matter has been written on the paucity of men of genius in Spain, but it would be difficult to say as effectively in many pages what Palacio Valdés, in his own inimitable vein, has resumed in a few lines:[3] "I do not believe there are in Spain as many men of genius as it is supposed. The taxes absorb more than half of

1. Semblanzas Literarias, 184.
2. Ibid. p. 85.
3. Ibid. p. 253.

the net product of the land and the industries; the harvests have been very bad for several years. And if to these are added the frequent calamities we suffer, such as wars, earthquakes, floods, etc., etc., it can be safely affirmed, without fear of equivocation, that a nation so weakened and miserable can not adequately nourish six dozens of talented men."

Speaking of the lack of prestige of the poets of the present as compared with those of the Greek and Roman periods and of the middle ages, he says that though poetry is immortal, the universal esteem in which the poet was once held has nearly died out. He goes on: "A poet, nowadays, is not a poet; he is a constitutional deputy, an ex-minister, a president of Congress, a civil governor, or a bank clerk who writes verses. When you meet any poet in the street or in a street-car, and engage in conversation with him, what you usually ask him is whether he has any hopes or fears of his party getting into power or going out of power, if he has been promoted, what is his present salary, what office hours he keeps, etc., etc., everything except poetry, because you are afraid to make him blush."[1]

Palacio Valdés becomes satirical at times but never forsakes his good nature. In contrasting genuine love of nature with that false and affected one of the frivolous pleasure-taker, he says: "one is not to confuse the love Aguilera feels towards nature with that frivolous and affected fondness, today so much in vogue among travellers and surf-bathers, who think they are paying to nature their debt of admiration by exclaiming, without rhyme or reason wherever they go: 'Magnificent! Delicious! Marvelous!'"[2]

The following bit shows the penetration of the true critic: "Espronceda is, to me more energetic in his Canto a Teresa than

1. Semblanzas Literarias. p. 85.
2. Ibid. p. 370.

Quintana singing the battle of Trafalgar. And it is because, in my judgment, Espronceda felt the disdains of his lady love more keenly than Quinatana the defeat of the Franco-Spanish fleet."[1]

One of the most cutting of Valdés's criticisms is that "inflicted" on the poet Grilo. It is the Valdés humor par excellence; it is what I might call an allegory of humor. For sheer refined irony I doubt if it has ever been surpassed in all literature. In calling attention to the wordiness coupled with the emptiness of meaning which Grilo displays in his poems, he assails him with this volley: "Mr. Grilo has succeeded as no other Spanish writer in placing at the service of every idea the greatest gift that Providence has given to man, and is the one gift which in the opinion of naturalists strictly separates us from the brute. Mr. Grilo has understood this, and of all human beings he is perhaps the one who has best profited by that inestimable gift, endeavoring by means of all the words contained in the dictionary of Domínguez (which is the most complete), to get as far as possible from the inferior animals. The word was not given to man in a single instant and as a free gift, but only after a long and painful apprenticeship. The transition between the inarticulate and the articulate sound cost our ancestors many centuries. Later, the passage of the monosyllabic tongues to the agglutinant languages, and from these to the inflective ones, was effected through a long historic period. Progress has not only marched side by side with the development of language, but according to eminent philologists, is but a consequence of this noble human faculty. And indeed, what an immense distance does not exist between primitive man, who expresses with an inarticulate sound his most intricate thoughts, and Mr. Grilo, who employs an infinite

1. Semblanzas Literarias, p. 386.

number of articulate sounds in order to tell us that the moon delights him and that he cannot get along without it! What a great advance mankind has not made, for instance, from Moses, who with two miserable words tries to tell us of the appearance of light, up to our poet, who would have used two thousand as is required by the magnificence of the subject and the dignity of the poet:"[1] Note the mock seriousness of the entire passage, and to make it even more trenchant, he inserts footnotes in which he cites such ponderous authorities as Darwin, Haeckel, Hovelacque, and Whitney, in authoritative support of his ponderous assertions in regard to the development of language. Incidentally, the reader, generally ignorant of these philosophic matters, is glad to be enlightened by such passages as well as to chuckle at their overflowing humor.

As every sincere man, Palacio Valdés practices what he preaches. His mind was too great to be permanently encased within the narrow confines of mere criticism, and catching the spirit of the artists he learned to admire, he himself created and became one of them, and while Spain probably lost one of her greatest critics, her loss was more than compensated by gaining one of her best novelists.

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1. Semblanzas Literarias, p. 322.

III

PALACIO VALDES'S PROFESSION OF FAITH.

His Views on Art, Especially as Applied to Fiction. From the very beginning of his literary career, Palacio Valdés occupied himself eagerly with all the phases of literature - fiction, poetry and the drama, with a liberal sprinkling of social and natural science. His juristic and journalistic training combined to develop his native talent for analysis to a high degree of sensitiveness. His delving in philosophical and economic subjects completed the mental process by teaching him how to abstract and to organize into a synthetic whole the various elements presented to his analytical insight. The result was a literary labor which, for breadth of conception, for sheer intellectual grasp, and for versatility of spirit and of manner has few parallels in present-day literature. One could scarcely have imagined in the heydey of his literary "pranks" as a critic, that their author was capable of assuming the grave earnestness of an essayist on art. Yet a keener mind might have discovered behind the hilariousness of his earliest critical studies unmistakeable evidences of his wide and fruitful reading. Those studies already contain not a few interesting side-lights on the writer's ideas on literary art, ideas which he later expanded into more ambitious essays, the most important of which are by far the prologues to his two novels of Andalusian life, La Hermana San Sulpicio and Los Majos de Cádiz. Sylvester Baxter, writing in the Atlantic Monthly, refers to these prologues as, "two of the most valuable essays upon the art of fiction ever written". William Dean Howells, in his Criticism and Fiction, in quoting freely from the first of these prologues, believes that it is an essay which "every one intending to read, or

1. Op. cit., p. 8.

even write a novel, might acquaint himself with, for it contains some of the best and clearest things which have been said on the art of fiction in a time when nearly all who practice it have turned to talk about it."[1] The Spanish critic, Blanco García, who is disinclined to agree with Valdés's aesthetic views, frankly admits that the prologue to La Hermana San Sulpicio "reflects most faithfully the spirit and method of the author", and that "it contains very original ideas on beauty and art.... the product of an observant genius who knows how to think for himself." In addition to these prologues, Valdés contributed to La España Moderna an article in which, under the caption La Estética del Carácter, he discusses the relation of human character to literary art.

In all of these essays the author not only reveals intimate familiarity with the philosophy of art, but makes it intelligible to the reader by frequent use of illustrative material, in a style of remarkable precision and lucidity. The intrinsic merit of these essays is immeasurably enhanced by a seriousness and an underlying sincerity which not only save them from affectation and pedantry, but elevate them to the dignity of a personal profession of faith; a profession, moreover, which the author has always consistently honored in faithful and highly creditable performance.

Two main points are clearly discernible in Valdés's prologue to La Hermana San Sulpicio, namely, what the author conceives to be the modern theory of art, that is, what he calls his truth about art, and the application of this truth to novel writing, that is, his technique of fiction. Under these main heads, he discusses every important phase of the principles and the art of novel writing. Nothing escapes his searching pen; his conception of art, the signi-

1. W. D. Howells: Criticism and Fiction, pp. 55seq.

ficance of the literary schools, the morality of art, humor, pessimism and optimism, character-drawing, style, diction, composition, to say nothing of many thoughtful discussions on the more abstract questions of literature and of life.

It may be stated at the very outset that Valdés's point of view, whatever his philosophic method in other directions, is far from dogmatic. "What I am going to state", he says, " is not the truth." In developing this thought, he begins by condemning the current misconception that reflection has no place in the creations of the artist. His thought is, in substance, that the man-in-the-street and the artist are one and the same in so far as they both feel the sentiment of beauty. Where the latter begins to differ from the former is in the artist's greater consciousness of his aesthetic feelings, or, in other words, in the artist's ability to express, as well as to feel, beauty. This ability arises from reflection acting upon the artist's feelings and experience. Now, this is not the current idea the general public has of the artist. Somehow a great many people like to imagine the artist, like the witches of old, going through some kind of epileptic fits which, naïvely enough, they take to be the cause of his inspiration. As a matter of fact, what is meant by inspiration is nothing more nor less than reflection guiding and illuminating the spontaneous activity of genius. From this guiding and illuminating consciousness there arises in all writers the need of reflecting upon their own artistic feelings, their attitudes and their preferences. This is what constitutes their theories of art. The individual nature of these theories obviously precludes their applicability to art in general; they stand for those partial truths which constitute the rational expression of the feelings of each individual and of each generation of individuals through the

ages. Out of the aggregate of these truths results the science of aesthetics, applicable to all art at any given time and place. So, while each writer is within his right to proclaim his own truth about art, he becomes arrogant and presumptuous as soon as he attempts dogmatically to impose it on the rest of mankind. On the other hand, if his truth is not the only truth, it is not a mere opinion, but one of the truths, and as such, it must stand until it is absorbed or eliminated by the vast stream of the whole collective truth of humanity.

Now, what is Valdés's truth about art? Art, to him, is that which has the mission of revealing the divine element in things. As Mr. Baxter remarks, "it is a sort of pantheism." And yet, this "sort of pantheism" is not to be confused with that sort of hazy impersonality which pantheism is apt to suggest. It is, rather, an all-inclusive personality which invests all things with an underlying idea that only art can fully express. In man, this idea is what Kant calls "intellectual character", which is the divine principle expressing itself in each human individual. Now, this is the true meaning of personality. The "personality" we ordinarily talk about is that immediately revealed to us through the empirical character, which embraces only the finite and the ephemeral, and cannot therefore be held to constitute that true personality of which art is the highest and noblest expression. "Art", Valdés continues,[1] " is truth and poetry. Out of a clod of earth a diamond is formed; out of a mass of feelings, a poem is produced. It is all a matter of knowing how to carve it out." The clod of earth and the mass of feelings as such are meaningless; it is the idea realizing itself in the diamond and in the poem that gives them meaning and makes art possible. All

1. Semblanzas Literarias, p. 220.

reality, therefore, is equally beautiful in this sense, and imperfections depend only on the higher or lower degree of emotional appeal that it makes to the artist.

This conception of art once established, Valdés proceeds to discuss the object of art. Is it to imitate nature or to represent beauty? Is it to copy reality or to create it? According to the Hegelian conception, the greatest artist is he who, freeing himself from nature, uses her forms as symbols in order to express ideas, modifying them in his own way and recasting them in more perfect and purer molds; in other words, to Hegel and his school, the greatest artist is he who creates ideas. But Valdés goes further: he says that nature is herself a creation of the spirit, while art is only a re-creation. "The artist" he continues "cannot modify, not even touch, those fundamental forms; he does no more than to mirror them in his individual spirit, in a fashion peculiar to his own individuality. Thus, the artist who copies a landscape from nature does not really copy; he re-creates."[1] The individual reproductions of the same picture or the same scene by different artists will necessarily differ from one another, according to the individual mode of expressing the inherent idea of the picture or scene. "This reflection of exterior nature or of her sensible determinations in the individual spirit is the fundamental of art. To say, then, that an artist must not copy, but create, is nonesense, because he can in no wise copy nor can he create. He who deliberately attempts to modify nature shows that he has not felt her beauty, nor can he make others feel it. That puerile desire which some artists without genius show to go about selecting from nature, not what seems to them beautiful, but what they believe will seem beautiful to others, and rejecting what may displease them, ordinarily produces cold and insipid works. For, instead of ex-

1. Prologue to La Hermana San Sulpicio, p, XIX.

ploring the illimitable fields of reality, they cling to the forms already re-created by artists who have succeeded, and make statues of statues, poems of poems, novels of novels."[1]

Art can never, like science, systematically teach partial truths; "but art shows us in rapid and fulgurant vision the totality of truth which palpitates in all beings."[1] So, while the ultimate end of science and art is one and the same, the former leads us to it eternally by analysis, and the latter eternally by synthesis. It is the old problem of the extreme points of a straight line meeting at infinity.

Valdés takes a broad view of the significance and developement of schools and literary movements. "Art is the expression of life," he says " and it therefore follows faithfully all the evolutions of the spirit, extracting and gathering from them all the elements of beauty which constantly accumulate with the growing consciousness of the race." "The foundation of all spiritual progress, and consequently of art," he goes on to say "resides in this growing self-consciousness."[1] Now, if art is the expression of life, it must necessarily be as diverse and as changing as life itself. Consequently, Valdés despises that hard-and-fast classification of schools which most critics sophisticate about. Men talk about symbolic art, classicism, romanticism, and realism simply in order to distinguish between the tendencies which art follows in response to the prevailing forms and institutions of life, and to satisfy the demands of the human spirit. All these different manifestations have existed and subsist simultaneously through the ages in various degrees of intensity. The designation of a period as classic, romantic, etc., is merely a matter of emphasis, and not necessarily of exclusion of other elements

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1. Prologue to La Hermana San Sulpicio, p. XX.

which may be present in lesser degree. This leads Valdés to the conclusion that, after all, there is only one school, that of nature taking the shape of the artist's peculiar interpretation of it. All the epochs" he continues "have had their own necessary expression in art, the only one possible for them, and, in this sense, there is really no expression superior to any other; neither the classicists are superior to the romanticists, nor these to the realists. Symbolism, classicism, and romanticism have each been perfect expressions of the dominant idea of each epoch. The first three have ceased to be beautiful because they have ceased to be felt. These shiftings of emphasis respond to an eternal need of the spirit of constantly seeking new sensible determinations. What it has felt once satisfies it no longer."[1] Here the pragmatic point of view is evident: if the particular form that art takes in a given epoch satifies that epoch, it is true to the dominant idea of that epoch.

But all these different views and changing tendencies do not mean so many modifications or creations by the representative artists who interpret them; just as they expressed nature they felt her, and in this sense they are as truly realists as ourselves. "In like manner, if in the realistic tide that now bears us on there are some spirits who feel nature in another way, for instance, in the romantic way or in the classic way, they would falsify her in expressing her so. Only those falsify her who, without feeling classic-wise or romantic-wise, set about being classic or romantic, wearisomely reproducing models of former ages; and likewise those who, without sharing the sentiment of realism, which now prevails, force themselves to be realistic merely to follow the fashion."[1]

From this, our essayist passes to a discussion of realism.

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1. Prologue to La Hermana San Sulpicio, p. XX.

Like every new movement, realism has been subject to attack; but the mere fact that it exists accredits its legitimacy, and defense of it is thereby made unnecessary. In this connection, Valdés makes some very pertinent observations. "There is" he says "in humanity a force of inertia which operates without ceasing upon any newly-acquired movement. This force is represented by the vulgar, who are in the majority and constitute the conservative element of society. Instinctively they reject and ridicule every discovery, every innovation, every bold effort in a new direction; but, although they often retard progress, they eventually become the instruments of securing it by virtue of the permanent impressions which the new movement, once acquired, makes upon them. It is these consevative spirits who have opposed the march of the classic and romantic movements, and it is they who still decry the certain triumph of realistic art."[1] Then Valdés goes on to refute the familiar objection to realism that it has done away with the grandiose ideals of the past, substituting for them the glorification of the commonplace and the trivial. He next passes in review the changing ideals since the time of Homer, and on through the middle ages, the renaissance, and the romantic movement up to our own epoch, and proves that the realism of today represents a higher development of idealism than any in the past, simply because it reflects a higher civilization. "The greatness of the ideal" he says "depends on the greatness of the spirit, and this in turn depends on the higher or lower degree of civilization."[1]

Valdés rightly considers realism to be a reflection of all the other manifestations of our epoch, and to be the direct result of the general movement of life. The realism of today is to art what democracy is to the political philosophy of the time. Just as the

1. Prologue to La Hermana San Sulpicio, p. XX.

latter has raised men to equality before the law, so art has raised the humble and the obscure to the level of beauty. Today, "the beings who are worthy subjects of art have neither country nor social position; they are born in all countries and in all classes of society. To be beautiful they need only an artist who feels them such, and has the adequate power of expression to make others feel them such." In the words of Mr. Howells,[1] "the true artist finds nothing insignificant; all tells for destiny and character; nothing that God has made is contemptible." Elsewhere Mr. Howells says, as Valdés himself might say, that realism is nothing more nor less than "the truthful treatment of material", and is called upon to assert fidelity to experience and probability of motive."

Valdés notes that, though realism is the predominant form that art takes today, there are realisms within realism, that is, variations of realism, according as each writer conserves his individual character because of the immediate influences to which he is subject. "So, French realism differs from Spanish realism, while this one differs in turn from English realism."[2]

Valdés considers French realism, commonly known as naturalism, as "a sort of deterministic and pessimistic realism." "Man" he says further "lives between two worlds, the world of necessity and the world of freedom, and the study of the former interests us exceedingly. The naturalist responds to the legitimate desire of exploring the world we live in, and shows us the human animal with the needs and the instincts which often identify him with the beast. The spectacle of the human beast when it is depicted by a true artist is not intended to demoralize:[3] on the contrary, the feeling of repugnance, and even

1. William Dean Howells: Criticism and Fiction.
2. Prologue to La Hermana San Sulpicio, p.XV.
3. It is safe to suppose that this conviction accounts for such characters as are portrayed in La Espuma, El Maestrante, and La Fe.

of horror, which such a picture inspires in us, stimulates us powerfully to cling more and more to the conquests we have achieved in the world of liberty..." "No one rises from the perusal of a naturalistic book without a purpose, more or less vague, of bettering the lot and morally elevating the abject beings therein portrayed."[1] Above the prevailing indecency and corruption, there rises some noble character, even in the books of the most sectarian, who represents the beauty of the spirit. In other words, the moral value of naturalism lies in that it presents the good by the force of its sharp contrast with evil; it seeks to make the good more attractive by making evil more repellent.

Valdés reproaches French writers, however, for their exaggeration and insincerity, for failing to express with loyalty their doubts about God's existence, with an eye to the popular craving for the exciting and the sensational. Valdés objects, further, to what he calls the prosaism of the French novelists.[1] "Observation," he says "far from being an end, as the French suppose, is only a means of discovering the life that animates nature. When one observes merely to observe, the work becomes prosaic, diffuse, colorless. In a word, the object upon which observation should be focused is not the detail of life, but the idea that this detail contains."

Valdés thinks that French naturalism will prove more ephemeral not only than classicism, but even than romanticism, because it is founded upon sorrow. The prototype of this literature he takes to be Flaubert's Madame Bovary. "Literature" he continues "cannot live long without joy. What we want is fresh, spontaneous, above all readable works which will stimulate some thought and feeling."[1]

The pessimistic tone of naturalism leads Valdés to an illuminating discussion on both pessimism and optimism. He says that

1. Prologue to La Hermana San Sulpicio, p.XXXI.
2. Prologue to La Hermana San Sulpicio, p. LIII.

pessimism is not the whole of truth, but is only half of the truth of life. All beings, as individuals, reflect only part of the whole truth, and are therefore subject to imperfections. As imperfections beget sorrow, it follows that all men have sorrow for their destiny. He who stops at this stage of thought, must be a pessimist. For optimism to appear as the other half of the truth in order to neutralize the ultimately fatal effects of the first half, we must view our individual being as eternally bound with the absolute being. In other words, when we penetrate more deeply into the human spirit and discover within us the essential unity which binds us all into a sense of common humanity, then we are optimists. The highest degree of optimism can be attained only by the saints and the mystics, who realize it in their lives by completely suppressing their sense of individuality, and absorbing themselves in the inner current of their deepest feelings, or, as they would express it, letting God live for them.

The two factors enter persistently into the creations of art. "Pessimism" he says[1] "is a mode of thought present in every epoch." The emphasis of individualism has naturally resulted in emphasizing also the pessimistic note in literature, an emphasis which has been more intense in France than in other nations because of the spectacular and violent nature that the politico-philosophical struggles assumed in the French national life.

Valdés then takes the opportunity of making clear his own personal attitude in regard to this subject. "I confess with all candor" he declares[1] "that I am neither a pessimist nor an optimist, or rather, I am both at times. In my modest productions may be found features determined by one or the other, according to my state of mind. Because there is perhaps in my earlier works more of the second element,

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1. Prologue to La Hermana San Sulpicio, p.XXXIII.

a foreign critic has said that my novels were permeated with a very pleasing optimism. I feel obliged to reject this eulogy. As I well know that the immediate triumph in literature generally belongs to those who emphasize the external note, I would become an optimist, would boast of it, and would carefully erase all pessimistic thought that might creep in on my manuscripts, with a view to affecting originality and obtaining the plaudits of the detractors of naturalism. But this would be to violate that artistic sincerity which I consider an indispensable condition of all literary work."[1]

As humor furnishes the keynote of the literary work of Palacio Valdés, it is important that I should give more space to his highly interesting and illuminating discussion on this subject.

"Tears and laughter" he says[2] "are but the concrete expressions of the particular state of thought at a given moment. Laughter betrays a joyful thought, as tears betray a sorrowful thought. But there are moments when these thoughts, transcending their physiological means of expression, rising to serene and neutral heights, and mingling indifferently, wear the mask of laughter when they are sad, and that of tears when they are happy. A humorist is he who experiences this transformation. A humorist, however, is not only he who sets his thoughts in opposition to his words, for this contradiction is evident in any satirist, but rather is he a humorist who sets his own habitual thoughts in opposition to the universal thought. The writer who aspires to produce a comic effect only, will never arrive at that lofty point. He must possess a lucid and superior mind, one which is able to appreciate the things of this world in their true proportions, and not in those that are visible to the vulgar eye. Humor is a delicate breath that permeates the writer's thoughts, smoothening their asperity,

1. Prologue to La Hermana San Sulpicio, p. XXXIV.
2. Semblanzas Literarias, p. 297.

restraining their tendency towards the absolute, and tinging them with the note of the relative. It is something that emancipates us from the meanness of this life, and lifts us up to a safe and elevated eminence. The humorist laughs at persons and events, but his satire is not poison-stained, for it does not kill; it vivifies. Cervantes, the greatest of humorists, who ridicules through a character the prevailing extravagant fondness for knightly adventures, could not help but making that character lovable to all sensitive hearts. The spirit of the true humorist is endowed with an inexhaustible tolerance towards humanity's imperfections rather than towards individual or local extravagances." This thought may well be supplemented by his declaration elsewhere that "that humorism which shows itself implacable and disdainful towards the debased manifestations of humanity, and which is respectful towards all that is noble, and pure, and innocent, and loyal, and self-sacrificing; towards everything, in fine, that proclaims that, though we come from the darkness, we march towards the light"[1]--that humor is the only one he accepts in the novel.

Valdés has never felt the importance of criticism, and it would not be unfair to add right here that his own critical studies, to judge by the light vein in which they were written, he never took seriously. Indeed, he himself testifies, in the preface to his collected critical volumes, to the reluctance with which he consented to have those volumes reprinted and included in the new edition of his complete works.[2] Yet, as he declares, he is far from spurning criticism as one of the legitimate expressions of human thought. He considers it, however, of secondary importance, and denies it the right to interfere with the writer's artistic independence. Our essayist distinguishes between two kinds of criticism: contemporary criticism

1. Prologue to La Hermana San Sulpicio, p. LXVII.
2. Semblanzas Literarias.

and the final judgment of humanity upon a work of art. The former is nearly always fallible because subject to inevitable personal influences from which the critic finds it difficult to extricate himself; the latter kind of criticism nearly always endures precisely because of the elimination of the personal factor.

In general, it may be surmised from Valdés's own writings that he inclines to the neo-Kantian or Hegelian point of view in art and philosophy; but it would be, I think, more in consonance with his general attitude of non-committance to say that he is eclectic. "I am not of those" he declares "who believe in the absolute necessity of affiliating themselves with a philosophical or political sect; but I have the conviction that every thinking man should feel the urge of creating for himself a system of truth without which our thought and conduct might always waver."[1] With these words, our writer assumes the attitude of the true artist and philosopher: he is primarily a critical spectator, a keen and intelligent observer of the drama of life, caring very little, if at all, for its melodrama. Not that he cares less for the laws and sects and institutions of society, in so far as they honestly and truly serve the ends for which they are intended, but he cares more for the infinite spirit which gave them birth. He wants first to be sure of the truth of his inward feelings before he may find his way through the laberynthine by-paths of this world.

That there is an eternal truth revealing itself in every individual form of life, and that the world is nothing other than a perpetual revelation of this truth, this is, in substance, the philosophy of Palacio Valdés. Developing this thought further, he says: "The ideas, that is, according to Plato, the original and immutable

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1. Semblanzas Literarias, p. 67.

forms and properties of all beings, do not manifest themselves in a general, abstract fashion, but in an infinite series of individuals.[1] Each of these is a revealer, but much more so the human individual, the culminating point of the ideal representation. And among the human individuals one appears from age to age through whose soul the Divine principle is revealed to us in a fashion more wonderful, as a beacon light illuminating the darkness of the road ahead. These exalted revealers are, to my mind, the arbiters of human history, those who trace out new paths for men to follow under their guidance through the ages. In this sense, it may be said that human history is explained by the biography of its great men.[2] Knowing what these immortal spirits have thought and done, we know what mankind has thought and done. Every superior spirit represents a new form of life, to which the rest of mankind adapts its mode of spiritual existence. History is not the unfolding of ideas, but the living of ideas. The ideas of Jesus were already in existence before him, but none fused them so perfectly as Jesus. He was not a man who preached this or that idea; he was the idea made flesh. In revealing his doctrine, he did not give his opinion; he gave himself." To be fair to Valdés, his sense of the influence of personality in human history should not be construed into a narrow theological interpretation. It is now recognized among modern sociologists that the influence of great leaders in molding social history is far more vital than had been hitherto generally supposed.

Elsewhere Valdés says that "the writer, the poet, who hopes to persuade and to move his fellow-men, needs to possess an exalted spirit, a heart wherein only great and worthy passions should vibrate, the exquisite sentiments of humanity." But this is not im-

1. Prologue to La Hermana San Sulpicio
2. The same thought, it will be remembered, is developed in Carlyle's Heroes and Hero Worship.

plying that the artist should become a saint; on the contrary, in order to feel all that, he should pass through the deepest experiences. "The writer should be above all a man", and love should be his aim.

The poet Rojas, one of Valdés's delightful characters, thus resumes his creator's philosophy of life: "The divine essence, immortal good and beauty, are found in every human being, and he who draws nearest to God and shares his sovereign intelligence, is he who joins himself to his fellow-creatures in the greatest love. No one can fathom a science without loving it; no one can excel in art without a passion for it. To be religious, you must love religion... So, I say, he who loves another knows what the other is because he penetrates his essence. Or, what amounts to the same thing, love does not disable judgment, but enables it."[1]

Mr. Howells, in commenting on these ideas, remarks that "Valdés is not only a novelist; he is a thinker. He knows how to see back of the apparent dissimilarities and contrasts of life one large, unifying principle." "When we come from philosophic speculation," continues the American novelist "from the fancy that plays with thought and fact, in the same graceful spirit, to matters of religion, our novelist knows, as few moralists have known, how to penetrate the heart of it, where Catholicism and Protestantism alike cease, and Christianity alone is."[2]

This ability of Valdés to get at the heart of humanity and search for the beauties that lie therein, is the best and most convincing argument in favor of his aesthetic ideas.

His Technique of Fiction. The second main point of Valdés's prologue to La Hermana San Sulpicio is very important, as it

1. Papeles del Doctor Angélico, in the story, Inteligencia y Amor.
2. William Dean Howells: Editor's Easy Chair, in Harper's Magazine, 123:958-961.

bears a close relation to his literary practice as a novelist. His observations under this head, following his point of view, represent his technique of fiction. It is indeed his, not only by right of profession, but also by right of performance. Yet, his views are so broad, so well-digested, and so sanely inspired, that they might very properly apply to the art of novel writing in general.

To Valdés, the novel of today is what the epic was to the ancients. Voltaire defined the epic as "the poetic narration of heroic adventures." That definition might serve to define the novel, if one is careful not to transcribe too literally the words "poetic" and "heroic". To the superficial, who can see neither poetry nor heroism in anything that is not verse or spectacular, Voltaire's definition is of course inadequate. But to a Palacio Valdés, the definition is even truer as applied to the novel than as ascribed to the epic. For the poetry and the heroism of the ancients were the reflection of an inferior stage of civilization; they were restricted to the marvelous, the mythological, the merely fanciful--the only forms of thought in which our remote ancestors were capable of expressing art. Today there are no limits either to poetry or to heroism; they penetrate into every recess, into every interstice of human life. Everything can become poetic and heroic as soon as it is so conceived by the true artist. But, after all this has been said, it must be remembered that both the epic and the novel depict what the respective artists have felt to be true and beautiful. Both forms of expression are therefore realistic to that extent, and just as Valdés has called the modern novel the epic of today, we might call the epic the realistic novel of the ancients.

Now, what do we mean by a realistic novel? Nothing more nor less than a work of art which portrays life as we know it, not as

we would like to know it. When a writer observes things and penetrates into them and discovers their inter-relationships and the thoughts and emotions which they inspire, he produces a realistic novel. "The real test of fiction" according to that keen critic and great novelist, Mr. Howells,"is this: is it true?--true to the motives, the impulses, the principles that shape the actual life of men and women? This truth, which necessarily includes the highest morality and the highest artistry, this truth given, the book cannot be wicked and cannot be weak; and without it all graces of style and feats of invention and cunning of construction are so many superfluities of naughtiness;...if the book is true to what men and women know of one another's souls, it will be true enough and it will be great and beautiful."[1] Palacio Valdés, who has been Mr. Howells's intimate friend for many years, might have written the passage here quoted from the American novelist, for it exactly represents his view on the subject.

To return to Valdés himself, he says that "the novelist of today who aspires to please must be a sagacious and an intelligent observer, he must portray real life with truthfulness and tact, he must bring into relief moral characters and types, he must be a novelist and a psychologist, and a bit philosopher besides."[2] He is "under an imperative obligation never to bore his reader, to keep his interest alert, his mind fetterd by invisible bonds which will carry him through the imaginary world without his feeling the fatigues of the journey."

Valdés recognizes that the novel may serve and has always served a social end, but he is careful to observe that before everything else the novel is a work of art, and that, as such, its

1. William Dean Howells: Criticism and Fiction.
2. Semblanzas Literarias, p. 154.

primary end is to realize beauty. If the novel does this first, it may, indirectly and even more effectively, serve other purposes.

Valdés then goes on to discuss more specifically the constituent elements of the novel.

The first element is the subject-matter. This may include all the relations of men with man and of man with nature. Within the love-motive there are infinite phases of it in which adultery has no place, and outside sexual love there are also sentiments and passions as worthy of being treated in the novel and as capable of making it interesting.

Another essential element of the novel is the argument, or the plot or intrigue. The argument is the result of the series of more or less interesting relations that the opposition of the characters give rise to in life. This means that the plot is always determined by the characters. "The true novelist, he says, sees the characters before he sees the plot, and if he takes the latter directly from life (which is indispensable), he will naturally observe that it is always a logical consequence of the character or nature of the persons involved."[1] Then he pronounces himself strongly against complicated plots, "a habit with those novelists who try to fit argument to characters, as if tracing the plan of a park and then planting trees here and there for ornament... Their aim is only to please the public."[1] With characteristic candor, Valdés confesses with a sense of shame that he too has fallen in that temptation, and declares he would gladly efface some chapters from his novels. Yet these chapters, he tells us, are precisely the ones which have been best received. And right here he takes occasion, even at the risk of disappointing his readers, to pledge himself to try to cast out

1. Prologue to La Hermana San Sulpicio, p. XLIV.

from his productions all false and untrue elements, and to try to produce not a violent, but rather a deep, effect. "My only aspiration," he continues," consists... in causing the reader to think and to perceive the beauties that daily pass unnoticed before his eyes. To this end, I choose the simplest argument in order to give reality to the picture, sparing the reader the always destructive illusion that what he reads may be a mere phantasmagoria; causing him to believe, on the other hand, that it is an integral part of reality, something which he has or might have experienced."[1] He is not ambitious to astonish the reader, for he well knows the ultimate consequences of these astonishments; but his ambition is that the reader be left with a permanent impression of a few characters whose originality and beauty he has himself felt and been deeply moved by in the course of his own experience. "To allow oneself to be guided by nature, he says, not to do her violence: this is my motto."[1] Evidently, Valdés is not eager to borrow from real life one of those rare cases of which one sometimes says, "it reads like a novel". To him, everything is argument because all life is equally interesting.

The quality on which hinges the fame of Palacio Valdés as a novelist is his mastery of character-portrayal. It is not surprising, therefore, that in his discussion on the technique of fiction he should place his greatest emphasis upon this phase of novel writing, which is after all the most vital in any work of art.

The depiction of character is "the nerve of the novel", he says. "Human action, in real life as well as in that reflected by art, is formed by the interplay and contrast of human passions; these passions, as incarnated in individuals, constitute the characters of a novel. Hence in the characters, that is, in the identification of

1. Prologue to La Hermana San Sulpicio, p. XLV.

passion with the will, lies the immediate cause not only of all works of art, but of all human works of importance. It is in the study and expression of character (not in its creation, as the critics assert) that the climax of the novel or epic is to be found. There is no poor work with well-traced characters." To him, the only condition of character is that it be human, and this is enough.

Valdés rejects the "creation" of character, as is maintained by Hegel and his school. You cannot take qualities from different characters and create a single composite character from the combination; nor can you form characters by abstraction, that is, by forming personages for the ideas one desires to express. What a true artist does is to take a character from reality and idealize it, not in the sense that he communicates to it qualities it has not, but in seeing clearly the idea of that character. It is one thing to take a character from real life and see clearly into it; it is quite another thing to "make up" a character out of clever combinations. The art of jugglery has nothing to do with the art of character-drawing.

In addition to action and vitality, consistency, that is, the predominating quality which gives unity to the character, is to be attained. Valdés has a strong dislike, whether in life or in art, for vacillating characters, nerveless and hazy, and as strongly favors those that are well-defined, but as he realizes that the former have just as real existence as the latter, he cannot deny them aesthetic value.

A serious defect of the novel of a certain school which might be called of "the novelists of the world" is the falsifying of the character itself, to which they attribute all kinds of paradoxical contradictions and passions, such as love disguised as hate, energy

concealed under weakness, innocence disguised as malice, etc. Octave Feuillet in France and Edward Bulwer-Lytton in England have used this method.

To depict a character accurately and faithfully does not necessarily mean to depict it too minutely. Valdés is not in favor of too much psychological analysis, because, as he says, it means that, in trying to avoid falseness, the writer incurs more falseness because man can be known only of his consciousness. (It is perhaps in point to note here that all of Valdés's important characters follow this sensible view. He differs in this respect from Valera and Picón). Usually, Valdés thinks, a too minute analysis betrays the author's own thoughts rather than the character's. This fault results from analyzing too much without accompanying actions. It is much safer to present the action and the dialog, and let these speak for themselves. "Literature", he goes on, " must be objective, because in painting what we see, we do not paint only the world we see, but also our own soul, of which the outside world is like a magic mirror reflecting, in picturesque and moving panoramas, what is noblest in us."[1]

When Valdés says that the humble and the obscure furnish to the observation of the novelist as rich a field for the heroes and the heroines as the higher ranks of society, he does not mean that he is to choose indiscriminately by making heroes of individuals of limited spiritual resources, whatever their social stations in life. To illustrate, the servant-girl, protagonist of Flaubert's Coeur simple, is socially very insignificant; she has a very limited intelligence: yet it is a character that inspires us deeply for her abnegation and the rectitude of her moral sense. On the other hand,

1. Prologue to La Hermana San Sulpicio. p. LIV.

Moreau, the hero of L'éducation sentimental, of the same author, is morally insignificant. Cases like these abound in Valdés's own novels, although characters of the stronger type are much more frequent than those of the weaker type.

In discussing the relative importance of the characters of a novel, Valdés notes that the rôle of victim is in general more interesting than others, and that women, because they are weaker, represent that rôle better than men. Novelists frequently posit the moral ideal in a woman's soul. The moral ideal is in the last analysis based upon love, love of everything save love of oneself. Woman, who possess a nature more loving than man's, incarnates love more perfectly and more attractively. But here again Valdés is not exclusive. "The artist's spiritual nature must unite masculine strength and courage to the exquisite sensibility and tenderness of woman."[1] In this connection, it is interesting to observe that Valdés bases man's distinction from the animal upon the former's elective faculty to fulfill his genetic need. Without this faculty, he says, no art and poetry could be possible, for in the happy and mysterious and complete union of man and woman is revealed the "eternal feminine" of which the poet speaks.

Another integral element of the novel is composition. It may be said, in general, that the novel, as all other works of art, should have proportion, that is, it should have unity, variety, and harmony. But lest he should be considered dogmatic on these points, Valdés goes on to note that not all the great novelists follow those methods. The Latins, he informs us, are more susceptible to unity than the Saxons. The latter emphasize scenes, situations, pictures, types, and their critics are accordingly affected in their criterion

1. Prologue to La Hermana San Sulpicio, p. LI.

by this prepossession. To illustrate his point our novelist informs us that English and North American criticisms of his own books, Riverita and Maximina, disregarded entirely the question of unity; while French and Italian critics considered lack of unity as the chief defects of those novels.

Valdés declares himself strongly against inordinately lengthy novels, even if they be realistic. The piling up of information and description, he observes, should be discouraged, for "a novel is above all a work of art, not a diary".[1]

By a perfect work in literature Valdés means that which by the simplest means reflects the most life, and accumulates the most beauty within its own limits. That is to say, the greatness of a novelist is not to be measured by the number of excellent qualities spread over many works, but rather by those qualities harmoniously concentrated in a single work. For instance, Manon Lescaut,[2] which is more than a century old, is today more read than any other of the most famous contemporary novels, editions of it multiply indefinitely, and the heroine is reproduced everywhere in paintings and engravings, and lives with an existence more real than that of many historic personages. On the other hand, Alexander Dumas, the elder, who was in his time considered a prodigy of genius, the supreme novelist of our age, in spite of the recentness of his works, is hardly read, and the time will soon come when he will be completely forgotten. It is, of course, invidious to multiply examples occurring in our own day, when so many great and popular men of letters are still alive, but such examples will inevitably occur to any one more or less conversant with contemporary literature.

1. This principle was not followed in our author's La Espuma, a novel abounding in a miscellany of colorless characters and scenes very loosely connected.
2. Antoine Francois Prévost.

The composition, or the structure of a novel, Valdés continues, cannot be determined *a priori*, but it must depend on the country and race of the writer's characters, and, above all, on the nature of the subject. There are subjects which lend themselves admirably to a well-proportioned composition: an episode, for instance covering a brief period and little space, and involving few characters. Valdés mentions his own *Marta y María* and *El Idilio de un Enfermo* as having been considered by critics to have harmonious proportions. To these, may be added *José*, *El Maestrante*, *Tristán o el Pesimismo*, and especially *La Alegría del Capitán Ribot*. The author, however, distinguishes between unity of character and unity of dramatic interest, the first of which is the more intimate, the more spiritual, and consequently the less visible. Cervantes, *Gil Blas*, Dickens, lack superficial unity, and yet, who denies them true unity?[1]

Another element of the composition is the dénouement, or the climax. Says Valdés: "I believe, with Hegel, that the climax should not be of a tragical character except when it is necessary to produce a spectacle of a higher degree. Where this necessity does not appear, the introduction of sorrow and misfortune is not warranted."[1] There is something delicately pathetic when the author, in justifying the tragic dénouement of his novel, *Maximina*, declares: "Like the one who served me as a model to portray the heroine, alas! she had come down to earth from heaven with too much momentum to stop too long in the sad abode of earthly existence!"[1]

There enters also within the scope of composition the prominence now given to the portrayal of nature and of the manners of the country wherein the action takes place. This is what is called *local color*. This feature has of course immense importance, on acount of

1. Prologue to *La Hermana San Sulpicio*. p. LIX.

the close bond of union of man with his land and race. Yet, like everything else in novel writing, the depiction of nature and social manners are liable to abuse. Their place in the novel should be only the background of the picture of which the characters should always constitute the foreground. After all, "the greatest study of mankind is Man". "Man is eternally the highest point of interest for man, because it is in man that resides the ultimate evolution of all created things." "What makes a novelist or a dramatist such is the knowledge and the feeling of human passions." All else is accessory, The supreme example in this respect is Shakespeare, "the most powerful reflector of the spiritual universe in the memory of men."[1]

The desire of making a vain display of style and wealth of diction is a prolific source of abuse in description. "The description of exterior nature, to Valdés, is justified only if it serves to discover the mysterious bond of union between man and the objects surrounding him, or in order to determine the impression that nature produces at a given moment upon man's spirit."[1] Rules for description Valdés believes to be of no avail, as the true novelist is guided by his artistic instinct, which rarely errs.

Valdés's views on style could not be sounder. He rightly conceives style to be thought made visible, and orginality of style is justified only when it faithfully reflects originality of thought. "In order to avoid affectation, he says, the artist must not be conscious of his own personal peculiarities, but he must adapt his expression to the nature of the object he wishes to present. His originality will then consist in the original way he has of conceiving the universe, not in his conscious effort to appear original."[1]

Valdés believesthat the humoristic style is the best adapted to

1. Prologue to La Hermana San Sulpicio. p. XLIX.

bring into relief the author's originality of thought; for humor frees him from the restraints of that conventionality which is the most prolific source of affectation in style. The so-called sallies and witty sayings are like flashes of imagination suddenly revealed by contact with reality, without apparent order.

In spite of what is generally thought about him, Valdés dislikes to be considered blindly in favor of humoristic style as such, though he is willing and ready to admit that this quality is perhaps the most intimate and genuine of his temperament. He distinguishes at least three kinds of humor: cynicism, which mocks at everything in existence, good or bad, human or divine; then that artificial humor which alters and transforms at will the logical order of the natural relations of life, revelling in paradoxes, play on words, and the like; and, finally, that humor whose effect is obtained by contrasting the vain appearances of things against a high ideal which the author does not express but which he vaguely suggests. Among the representatives of the first kind of humor are found a multitude of satiric writers who believe in nothing, not even in their own conscience, who throw their talent at the feet of their vile passions and attack good and evil, God and Mammon, indifferently. As representatives of the second kind of humor, Valdés mentions John Paul Richter and Henry Heine. He might have included also his own compatriot and intimate, Leopoldo Alas. The third, and highest, kind of humor counts as its classic representatives Cervantes, Sterne, Molière, and Dickens, and, I may add, Valdés himself. Valdés's expressed attitude as to these three kinds of humor is one of contempt for the first two, especially the first; while he accepts and admires --and practices--the last. Concerning the first kind of

humor, he exclaims, in a flash of a righteous indignation as holy as any that a biblical personage might utter: "I would rather tear my pen to pieces than knowingly to mock at the good, the holy and the beautiful."[1]

Ever mindful of the true proportion of things, he is averse to seeking the humoristic mode of expression deliberately. It should come only "when the soul feels itself in a state of moral superiority with respect to the fleeting vanities of life."[1]

Valdés is careful to draw a sharp distinction between style and diction. "Style", he says, "is form; but it is a spiritual form: that is why it remains unaffected in translation. Diction is purely an instrument of very secondary importance." "There are those", he continues, " who sacrifice exactitude and energy of expression for the sake of writing a sonorous, laberynthine, or classic paragraph. The polished artificiality of diction produces a material result which prejudices the spiritual effect."[1] The value of diction, therefore, according to our author, is measured by its adaptability to the thought it wishes to convey; "diction is a means, not an end, and, as such, it must not detract our attention from the true end." He deprecates the desire of many writers to imitate the language of the classics; what should be imitated is the beautiful and perfect correspondence between thought and its expression found in all the great writers, whether "classic" or not.

The attitude of Valdés towards the immoral license so often depicted and sometimes even glorified by French naturalism, is uncompromisingly adverse. The study of the animal instincts and passions of man has for Valdés only a historical value; because, if man originates from animality, every day he separates from it more

1. Prologue to La Hermana San Sulpicio. p. LXVII.

and more, and this, and no other, is the true foundation of human progress. "We come, it is true, from the instinctive, the unconscious, the necessary; but we are marching towards a higher consciousness, towards the rational and the free." Every man owes it to his dignity as a human being to respect modesty, he says. But this does not imply that there is no beauty capable of expression in the sexual love motive. "By no means. What I maintain is that in order that there should be beauty, the idea must be shown, and this can only appear when to the sexual intercourse peculiar to the beast, is added the spiritual element belonging to man. Only that is beautiful, good, and true, which conforms to the inner nature of things."[1]

Valdés shows no mercy towards what he calls efectismo in literature. This common defect may be present in every element of fiction, especially in the portrayal of character and in style. By efectismo he means "the persistent falsifying of sentiment with the crude purpose of producing mere effect, of affecting originality."[1] The excessive indulgence in this defect leads to certain decadence in literature. "Such a vice", he continues, "strikes its root in human nature itself, and more visibly in the artist. The latter always keeps in his spirit something feminine which leads him to "flirt" with the reader, coquettishly displaying the qualities in which he believes to surpass, just as women smile in order to show a white and even set of teeth, or draw their skirts to show the foot, even though there is no mud in the street."[1] "But the reader, generally wiser than the writer supposes him to be, suspects that sentiment of vanity and laughs at it."[1] Such writers, like the popular newspaper, supply "what the public wants", and what the public wants

1. Prologue to La Hermana San Sulpicio. p. XXXV.

is to be dazzled and blood-curdled rather than to feel and think gently.

Valdés closes his prologue to La Hermana San Sulpicio with a discussion on the artist's reward. "The true artist," he says, " is not disturbed by lack of success, because what he loves about all things is his own artistic activity,"[1] in which he finds the liveliest and purest joys of his life. For this reason the most modest of artists may be as happy in his labors as the greatest genius. The artist may measure his happiness either by elevating and ennobling the spirit of his fellows, or by securing their applause and enjoying social preeminence. "The first of these joys is legitimate; the second is less so, nor should it be desired by high-souled men. To be read and to be understood: this is the noble aspiration of the writer. If glory is worth anything, which is questionable, I do not conceive of any greater one or more desirable one than to make others think and feel through time and distance, what we think and feel; to make them weep over what has caused us to weep and laugh over what has caused us to rejoice; impel them to live our own life, to partake of our own meat and of our own blood, according to the gospel's sublime phrase. How can such a glory be compared with that of being feasted by the vulgar and flattered by the newspapers when we see every day that this applause is bestowed in equal measure upon the ignorant and the wise, on him who knows his art as on him who is ignorant of it? The intense pleasure of developing his activity and exercising the high privilege of individual representation; the no less intense joy of discovering that universal force in the essence of things which in the world of reality is veiled by the chaos of particular interests and fleeting circumstances, by the caprices of

1. Prologue to La Hermana San Sulpicio. p. LXXVII.

will and the passions of men; and to share all these pleasures with our fellows -- behold the ture, the only happy reward of the artist."

Finally, Valdés closes his masterful prologue by saying that the novelist himself can deal with aesthetic and literary criticism more competently than anybody else, as he abundantly proves by his own efforts in that direction. To read his own ideas on the theory and practice of novel writing is to read a better, keener, and more intelligent criticism on his own works than any critic, Spanish or foreign, has yet done.

IV.

THE FICTION OF PALACIO VALDÉS

In the preceding chapter I have attempted to give a definite impression of the literary creed of Palacio Valdés. I have intimated also that in his work as a novelist he followed that creed with well-nigh perfect consistency. "Never did a novelist", says Professor Showerman, "follow more consistently for thirty-five years the ideal formulated in early youth."[1] A Spanish critic,[2] on the occasion of his critical study on Tristán o el Pesimismo, remarks that Palacio Valdés occupies a unique position in literature, a position in which he remains true to himself, no matter what the renovating processes of fiction and of literature may offer to more fragile minds. "As he wrote, he writes; as he thought, he thinks, and leaves to the young the option of venturing into new pathways and experiments." Palacio Valdés's creed is not only a creed; it is also a program which furnishes the master key to the characteristic qualities of his work as a novelist. No method, therefore, that I might adopt for a critical discussion of his novels, could take the place of his own well-ordered and clear outline of what he conceives to be his best standard for judging a work of art.

The first thing, then, to consider, according to that plan, is the subject matter of Valdés's fiction. The themes of which Valdés treats cover a wide range: from the simple, idyllic love depicted in José, to the high idealism of La Fe; from the sensuous coquettishness of La Hermana San Sulpicio, to the touchingly pathetic modesty of Maximina; from a satire on pedantic science to a satire on provincial journalism. In all the novels of Valdés, however, love

1. Op. cit., p. 8.
2. R. D. Perés: Review of Tristán, in Cultura Española, 1906.

holds a pre-eminent place, either as the primary theme, as in Marta y María, La Hermana San Sulpicio, Maximina, La Alegría del Capitán Ribot, José, or as a unifying link to hold the interest of description of social manners, as in Riverita, El Cuarto Poder, Les Majos de Cádiz, La Espuna, and La Fe. Palacio Valdés's loves are nearly all sexual loves, but they vary widely in degree of ideality. The lowest depth of passion is sounded in La Espuna by the Duke of Requena, who finally becomes completely brutalized by his raving sensuality. The highest degree of ideality in love is reached by the angelic Maximina, whose virgin purity bloomed into a conjugal and motherly devotion of the tenderest sort. Intermediate degrees are represented by the very human loves of José and Elisa, of the Sister San Sulpicio and Sanjurjo, of Marta and Ricardo; by the mystical ecstasies of María, and by the less holy passions of Obdulia, of Castell, of Gustavo Núñez and Elena, etc. Valdés has thus shown a wide range of vision tempered by a wise discrimination which has enabled him to select only those aspects of love one ordinarily meets with in daily experience. He has consistently avoided the exceptional, the violent passions, the terrifying conflicts engendered by those sudden outbursts of emotion which generally call for the melodramatic and the theatrical. His aim is to confine himself to those less spectacular but deeper currents of life which best lend themselves to a quiet, unhurried, impersonal observation.

While our novelist recognizes that in modern society the subject of illicit love may be the source of many subsidiary human passions and give rise to the most recondite emotions of the human soul, he steers clear of that gloomy monotony which leads many

French writers to choose only adultery for their themes. "Within the love-motive", he says, "there are infinite hues in which illicit love has no place, and outside sexual love there exist other relations as worthy or more of being interpreted in the novel." Faithful to this conviction, Valdés set about to look far and wide on the vast horizon of humanity's life, to find therein untold treasures, out of which he extracted such spiritual gems as Maximina's wifely devotion, Cecilia's long-suffering love, Martha's delightful womanliness, the sister San Sulpicio's riotous vivacity, Captain Ribot's inspiring loyalty, and many other shinging examples, to say nothing of the sadder and darker but no less striking hues of human character. To be sure, adultery exists in real life and it has been given its due in Valdés's novels; but no more than its due: it has never been glorified. In Riverita, the illicit relations of Miguel and Lucía, the brigadiera, are so garbed in poetic language that they might appear attractive in themselves, were it not that Miguel's subsequent wooing of the innocent, trusting Maximina, sets off in striking contrast the mere sensuality of passion versus the infinitely higher inspirations of a maiden's love. The character of a passion is known by the company it keeps, and to judge by the company that illicit love keeps in Valdés's novels, it is far from edifying, and it is moralizing in the sense that it separates us farther from possible temptation. The novels in which illicit love is the theme constitute the negative, not necessarily the pessimistic, side of Palacio Valdés's fiction. And I say not necessarily pessimistic because, as I have pointed out, the aim of the author is to teach a moral lesson to those who see only the gaudy aspect of vice. If in these cases Valdés is at times negative in method, he is eminently optimistic in aim.

Prologue to La Hermana San Sulpicio, p. XLIII.

The same moderation is apparent in Valdés's handling of plot. He considers the plot as the series of the more or less interesting relations resulting from the conflicting interests of the characters. It is the characters, therefore, that make the argument of a novel. In other words, the argument is merely a projection of the character action. Valdés proves his point by the notable absence of artificiality and of elaboration which characterizes his plots. He lets the characters act and speak, and lets the action and dialog stand for the argument. His love of character-drawing, however, sometimes leads him astray, so that the action lags and thus weakens the interest of the plot; but this defect is usually counteracted by the artistic richness and frequent flashes of humor which embellish and animate his description of characters and scenes. This is why such books as Riverita, Maximina, El Cuarte Poder and Origen del Pensamiente are less compelling than charmingly interesting. In these novels, Palacio Valdés selects from the rich storage of his observant mind, a character which strikes him as interesting, dwells long on its past history, and after the reader has already begun to interest himself in its ultimate fortunes, the author goes on complacently with his main heroes, leaving the long-described but unimportant personages in the scrap-heap of oblivion. This method is an injustice to a large number of readers who think they have a right to look for symmetry, and a still larger army of readers who want to know what is going to become of the last man and the last woman -- family cat and all -- that the author has seen fit to introduce to their obliging attention. Professor S. G. Morley is inclined to reproach Valdés for this monopolizing of character-drawing at the

expense of swifter movement in the story. Says he: "Inasmuch as he is reading fiction, not observing life,... the reader has a right to expect progress toward some goal -- and that is what Valdés has frequently failed to provide."[1] My own feeling in the matter, however, is better expressed by W. D. Howells when he says that, "men come and go, and what they do in their limited physical lives is of comparatively little moment; it is what they say that really survives to bless or ban."[2] It should not be forgotten, in this connection, that Valdés's novels are above all moments of actual life faithfully reproduced with all the heterogeneity and seeming disproportion of chance observation. Whatever catches our attention instantly becomes interesting enough to us to dwell upon the object as long as our interest lasts. For, to Valdés, "everything is plot because all life is equally interesting." One does not read a Valdés's masterpiece with the thought that his plot is interesting and beautiful. In subordinating plot to character-drawing, Palacio Valdés does no more than follow the method and fulfill the aim of the true realist.

If the action and speech are the natural outcome of conflicting human passions, and if these passions are incarnated in human individuals, it follows that character is the axis around which revolves the whole of human life. This leads Valdés to give character the place of honor in his novels. It is in the description of character, therefore, that Valdés peculiarly excells. For his models he goes anywhere and everywhere: he picks them from the streets, surprises them in their most intimate domestic life, observes them with unfailing sympathy and keen irony in the cafés, in

1. S. G. Morley: The Novels of P. Valdés, in Poet Lore, 16:92.
2. William Dean Howells: Criticism and Fiction.

the tertulia, and in the tobacco factory; meets them at the theatre, follows them in their excursions, partakes with them of the thrills of a bullfight and of the religious expansions of a "romería". In bolder moments, he ascends the guilded heights of the aristocracy of blood and of capital, and dares even to penetrate into the sanctum sanctorum of ecclesiatical life. In short, the fiction of Palacio Valdés is primarily concerned with all the diversified manifestations of the common and intimate life of humanity. In faithfully interpreting this life Valdés inspires himself in his immortal predecessors, Shakespeare and Cervantes. Of the former, he says: "The man who has lived in every imaginable character is... William Shakespeare. No novelist, either ancient or modern, even including Cervantes, has yet been able to feel so many and so different passions with such energy. The soul of this wonderful poet vibrated at once with the passionate love of Juliet and the truly devilish evil and shrewdness of Iago, with the unbounded ambition of Macbeth and the innocence of Desdemona, with the avarice of Shylock and the mysterious majesty of Hamlet. Shakespeare is the most powerful reflector of the spiritual universe in the memory of men."[1]

I once heard a professor remark that Palacio Valdés is a man with the sympathy of a woman. This graphically explains our novelist's preference for woman characters. In the words of a Spanish critic, all the novels of Palacio Valdés exhale a sweet and penetrating "odor di femina." It is not by chance, therefore, that Valdés's best title to literary fame lies in his masterful revelations of the woman's soul. The rôle of victim appealed more than others to his sensitive, sympathetic nature, a fact which led him to regard women as better adapted to that rôle. He was impressed

1. Prologue to La Hermana San Sulpicio.

also by the fact that the moral ideal finds readier expression in woman than in her more calculating brother. And the moral ideal, to our novelist, resolves itself ultimately into unselfish love, which he believes woman incarnates more perfectly than man. From a negative standpoint, hatred, when lodged in a woman's heart, can become far more fiendish than the masculine sort. This point of view has colored all of Valdés's important woman characters. At the negative or materialistic extreme is Amalia in El Maestrante , a monstrous character cursed with invincible pride and reeking selfishness, a character subordinating every human instinct to the satisfaction of her animal passion. To compare Amalia to the beasts is a libel on the beasts, because animals at least betray something like regard for their parental instinct, and even if they did not betray such regard, they do not know what they do. But Amalia, whose refined cruelty to her little six-year-old daughter, on whose innocent body and soul she pours out all the unspeakable venom of her balked passion for a weak man, Amalia, I say, knows full well what she does. Yet this character, unbelievable as it seems, was inspired by a newspaper account of such cruelties committed in the vicinity of Madrid. But even if Amalia's character had no foundation in fact, it is not painted with fanciful exaggeration; but it keeps very close to that essential naturalness demanded by the best artistic insight. At the opposite extreme, on the positive or idealistic side, the character of Maximina stands out as the most perfect example of womanhood that comes within the scope of human possibility. It is to the everylasting credit of Valdés's art that in creating Maximina he has signally succeeded in giving us a superbly drawn picture of woman at her best without once transcending the reason-

able limits of reality. Maximina as Miguel's wife is only the projection of Maximina as the trusting, innocent sweetheart of the dashing Riverita. Her purity is all the more moving because it is so delicately blended with the truest conjugal affection. Under such conditions, her character becomes contagious and ennobles that of Miguel, who more than once is rescued from his occasional lapses into frivolity by the ever watchful devotion of the saintly wife. Palacio Valdés shows his consummate skill in presenting us woman as she loves intensely, tenderly, even passionately, with all those inner touches of feeling which are so intimately appealing to the deeper human sympathies of men.

The two characters just described show Valdés's wonderful versatility. His pen traces with equal skill the bold strokes of the highest human love and the vilest brutal instincts of the human heart. Vézinet considers Valdés inferior to Pérez Galdés in psychological analysis. I hesitate with Professor Showerman to accept the French critic's view. Mr. Showerman,[1] with true critical insight, attributes such a view to the current taste for violent passions and striking emotions depicted with utmost dramatic intensity. I admit with pleasure that Valdés lacks dramatic intensity, and I say with pleasure, because it is just this lack of intensity that is really needed in an epoch of too much harping upon the more striking emotions. And if the phrase should read that Valdés lacks too much intensity, then this feature ceases to be a defect, and becomes one of his outstanding qualities. It is precisely this restraint which makes so many of his characters so much more meaningful, and definite, and suggestive. "The depths of Valdés", says Mr. Showerman,[1] "are calm depths, but they are depths. The love

1. Op. Cit., p.7

of man and woman, the love of children, the love of God, patriotism, pride, honor, joy, sorrow, pathos, hatred, despair -- all the passions are quick in his pages, and the stirring scenes that live in the reader's memory are frequent."

In most of his works, Palacio Valdés reveals himself a master in handling contrast. One of the shining examples of this phase of his work is his Marta y María. This novel brings the familiar biblical story of Martha and Mary down to the life and spirit of today, with this important difference, however: that in Marta y María, almost from the very first, there is not the slightest doubt in the reader's mind as to who chooses the better part. The portrayal of these two characters alone is enough to make the author's fame secure for generations to come. Here Valdés not only disarms criticism, but compels the highest eulogy. The great novelist shows unequalled powers of synthetic characterization, the secret of which is that his characters are not directly described or "analyzed", but suggested. Every delicate shade of emotion is vividly illumined by an indefinably sympathetic treatment of action and dialogue.

Within the same family circle, Martha and Mary live together. Did I say "live"? I should say, rather, that the two sisters are together by some mysterious chance of fate. For Martha is of the stuff wives and mothers are made of, while Mary was born to be a saint. The one is the legitimate daughter of Eve; the other is the mystical descendant of Santa Teresa. The glory of Martha is that of being natural; the ever-growing obsession of Mary is that of being one with her God, of being supernatural. There is in Martha a curious and withal delightful mingling of a playful seriousness which invites familiarity while compelling respect; whereas Mary is

self-contained in her ecstatic reveries, and eventually becomes forbidding and intractable. While Mary, in order the better to serve her God, gradually divests herself of all human affections, "Martha goes about binding up the wounds dealt by her sister, without ever pausing to ask herself if her energies are being directed toward the greatest development of her spiritual nature." In striking phrase, Professor Morley declares that "never was the imposing selfishness of religiosity more sharply contrasted with the sublime religion of a useful life."[1]

Such are the opposing characters of this wonderful book. To read them is to know them, and to know them is either to love Martha or to feel a certain pitiful contempt towards Mary. In a word, to read Marta y María is to live through an experience as deep and lasting as any in the world of reality -- which is the supreme test of a writer's power of character description. Vézinet draws an interesting parallel when he says that "Marta y María is at bottom in the realm of faith what Don Quixote is in the field of honor; the former is a work of satire against religious quixotism."[2] With all due justice to Valdés's expressed attitude of deep reverence towards true religion, I do not hesitate to believe that Vézinet's statement would be accepted as just by the great novelist himself.

Another example of contrast of characters is contained in El Cuarto Poder. Out of the kaleidescopic background of this novel of manners, the author brings to the fore the gentle Cecilia and her younger sister, Venturita. The former is betrothed to Gonzalo. She is a plain, quite, loyal, devoted, long-suffering girl whose real mission in life is that of loving simply and deeply. As Ven-

1. S. G. Morley: The Novels of P. Valdés, in Poet Lore, 16:92.
2. F. Vézinet: Le roman espagnol contemporain. Paris, 1907.

turia blooms into beautiful womanhood her unprincipled vanity gradually lures Gonzalo away from her sister. This very simple situation is enough to furnish the author almost unlimited opportunities for developing, in his usual masterly way, the inherent nature of each character. Each woman is the antithesis of the other: Cecilia's loyalty to her sister goes so far as to compromise her own honor in order to shield her sister from her husband's suspicion; Venturita's treacherous audacity, on the other hand, knows no other bounds than those of her own selfish vanity, and finally concludes by betraying her husband and driving him to suicide. Valdés has created between these two opposite characters that of Gonzalo, the dupe, the weak-souled man who, though big of physical frame, is neither too big nor too powerful to resist the ensnaring charms of Venturita or to discern the greater and deeper charms of Cecilia. Thus Gonzalo serves as the middle term which helps to bring into clear relief the spiritual nature of the two girls.

El Origen del Pensamiento affords another study in contrast in the well-rounded, well-balanced, affectionate, faithful and womanly Carlota and in her sister, Presentacioncita, her opposite in emotional temperament.

Another contrast less defined, but by no means less effective, and indeed one of Valdés's most enduring titles to literary fame, is delightfully portrayed in La Hermana San Sulpicio. The one great ability which above all others characterizes Valdés and sets him apart from most present-day novelists is his skillful blending of type with the most individual idiosyncrasies. Sister San Sulpicio is the type of a race, if there ever was one, and yet, what

character more intimately individual, more exquisitely peculiar! She is at once the incarnation of Andalusia and the differentiation from every other Andalusian individual; she reflects a general class and yet she is in a class by herself. The character confronting her is another type and another individaul all in one: the Galician Sanjurjo. The hide-and-seek love game between the astute and practical Galician with a penchant for poetry, and that voluble personification of poetry itself, Gloria, affords an entrancing picture as much of two young people in love as of two races which have discovered each other's secret charms.

Lest it should be supposed that Valdés indulged in contrasting women characters only, I shall note one or two more examples from the opposite sex. The constrast developed in La Alegría del Capitán Ribot is as follows: A ship captain rescues an old lady, the mother of Cristina, both of whom were visiting Gijón. This begins an intimate relationship between the captain and the family. Meanwhile the captain becomes secretely infatuated with Cristina, and the infatuation grows in intensity even after he learns that she is married. Her decorum and her modest reserve constrain Ribot from being more outspoken in his love and at the same time fill him with a greater respect and admiration for her. His prudence is also accentuated by the extreme cordiality which Cristina's husband shows towards him; a cordiality born of ingenuousness and a noble confidence which impress the captain deeply. Meanwhile Castell, a life-long friend of Martí (Cristina's husband), secretly pretends her love. This is perceived by Ribot, and forthwith a mutual antipathy is thereby established between them, an antipathy further intensified by the constrast of the two characters, both

in ideas and in temperament. Ribot stands out as a strong-willed bachelor, tempered by many rough experiences, and imbued with not a little dose of moral sense. Castell, on the other hand, is a cold, calculating sensualist, unmoved and unmovable save when his personal pleasures are at stake. Given the common passion, counteracted by the influence of Cristina's loyalty and Martí's confiding soul, and further affected by mutual antipathy, Valdés follows with great faithfulness and consistency the complicated but unmistakable reactions of the two opposite characters.

There is still another contrast, also between men, which should not be passed without notice. I refer to those strikingly opposing characters depicted in Tristán o el Pesimismo. These are typical of Valdés's manner as are his best women. Here are two men with certain opposite natural bents. One of them, Tristán, a brilliant and promising litterateur, who has been fortunate in everything he has undertaken, is cursed with a pessimistic strain which constantly rears its ugly head at the least provocation. He marries a woman of strong and lovely character, whom he finally drives from his home by his insensate suspicions and mad illusions of imaginary enmities against him. An insane, ridiculous jealousy leads him to provoke a duel with an innocent youth, who has a platonic esteem for his wife. In sharp contrast with this pessimistic and unbearable character, stands out D. Germán Ryenose, strong-hearted, stalwart, genial, profoundly sincere, and a quiet, kindly optimist, a man of extensive travel and experience, who has made a fortune in America, and, on his return to Spain, has married a girl many years his junior. The couple has lived happily for several years, with Reynoso's half-sister, the athletic Clara, who later became Tristán's wife. Reynoso

leads a quiet and contented existence, surrounded by his wild animals, his pigeons and his bees, which he loves. At his wife's instigation, the happy couple goes to live in Madrid with great pomp and splendor. This brings new social obligations, with their accompanying train of questionable joys and temptations. Elena, Reynoso's wife, becomes acquainted with Gustavo Núñez, a frivolous character, who tries to seduce the fragile but gentle-hearted Elena. She finally falls in the trap, and the husband, grief-stricken, is on the point of committing suicide, when he casually catches a glimpse of the crucifix, and, suddenly struck by a sense of shame for the cowardly act he is about to commit, changes his mind and is saved from himself. He then flees and establishes himself under an assumed name in an obscure village, where he engages in philanthropic and religious activities, winning everybody's heart. After two years of illicit relations, Elena breaks with Núñez, and, in great despair, resolves to return to her husband in the hope of forgiveness. Reynoso, far from rejecting her, with a noble gesture gladly welcomes and forgives her. This action saves Elena from self-destruction, and he re-admits her into the full privilege of his never-failing love.

This résumé of the story is almost like a profanation of its spirit. It would be difficult to carry further the infinite pathos of this book, its pervading idealism and its essential optimism. For it is a book that is unique in one vital respect, namely, that it presents man from an aspect which the mass of the unthinking public is not apt to accept or to believe in as a true masculine type. The average concept of the much-belabored phrases "personal dignity" and "manly courage", in a case like the one which confronted Reynoso, is to "shoot" somebody, and if enough courage is left, to "finish the business" through self-destruction. Men of milder temperament might content

themselves with proudly assuming an uncompromisingly unforgiving attitude towards the wayward wife. If to forgive and forget is a noble thing as a general proposition, how infinitely nobler that proposition becomes when applied to a woman who, by reason of her more sensitive nature, is more exposed to temptation, and therefore much more entitled to a man's forgiveness! When Elena, on handing Reynoso a small bottle containing poison, tells him that he would have stumbled on her dead body at his door if he had rejected her, he answers in these noble words: "That, never!" And, dashing the poison-filled bottle against the floor, he continues: "Did I kill myself when I saw the heavens fall over me? Of a truth, they did fall over me, but I grasp my arms around them and...you see, I was saved." This is the true, the only manly strength. The whole universe may crumble into dust, but Reynoso's fortitude and forgiving spirit shall endure beyond life. When from this magnificent exhibition of moral courage our thoughts turn back to poor Tristán, abandoned by his friends, by his wife, and even by his dog, and left at the edge of an abyss of the most awful desolation, then we realize the supreme lesson of this book, and our choice is made.

A last study in character contrast to be noted here is that furnished by La Fe. The two opposing protagonists of this highly stimulating story give rise to two parallel plots, one external and the other internal. The former furnishes the occasion whereby the latter is determined. The external plot is simple enough: Obdulia becomes infatuated with Father Gil, a pleasing, pious, and talented curate. Her hysterical passion brings about a peculiar sequence of events whereby the priest is falsely accused of having attacked her. Quite apart from and simultaneously with these external happenings, there has been going on a deep moral struggle in Father Gil's heart: being

an intelligent man, he had never been satisfied with the narrow and clumsy theology learned at the seminary, and this intellectual restlessness gradually led him to grapple with doubt. He eventually acquaints himself with philosophic literature supplied him by a confirmed skeptic, whose friendship he had cultivated in an endeavor to save him from atheism. This literature opens up to his inquiring mind new undreamed-of revelations, through which he hopes to find the truth he seeks. Yet, the more he reads the more perplexing the problem becomes. He eagerly explores all the philosophies, but in vain: all seem to lead to new problems and to intensify the doubts. Finally, he turns to Kant, whose answer is the most helpless of all. Nowhere does he find God and the Faith he craves. Then he lays his spiritual troubles before the curate of a neighboring town, who is reputed to be profoundly versed in theological dialectics. But the curate, who is a rough character and is more concerned in his little plot of ground and his mules than in the deep things of his office, mechanically recites to him the conventional stock-in-trade of theological "proofs" for all doubts, past, present, and to come. Father Gil turns away disgusted, as much in the dark as before. On his way home he meets Father Norberto,[1] who had just been ejected and roughly handled by the prostitutes he was trying to rescue. Norberto's naïve account of the affair reveals a simple-minded but self-sacrificing spirit, ready to risk his life and even his reputation for the sake of the morally destitute. This account impresses Gil most deeply. A light penetrates suddenly into his soul. The tightening grip of doubt is loosened, and henceforth his whole being vibrates with an indefinably comforting sensation. "After having interrogated dumb nature, after having consulted decrepit theology, the spirit of Jesus had at last breathed refreshing-

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1. La Fe, end of chapter IX.

ly into his troubled soul."[1] In other words, Gil had found that self-forgetfulness and service to others is the key to any true end of life.

To return now to the external plot, the case against Gil is carried to the courts. On the witness stand the vengeful Obdulia, with the consummate skill and the studied pathos known only to the ingenuity of a woman whose passion has been balked, weaves a tale to all appearances true and sincere, but a tale which is really a masterpiece of infamy and betrayal, on the strength of which the priest is sentenced to fourteen years in prison. During the whole terrible trial Gil bears himself with the sublime fortitude and the supreme, almost smiling, serenity of the man who has won over a moral trial infinitely more terrible than that of mere human justice. The men of the court, who marvel at this attitude, incomprehensible to them, were far from suspecting that the priest, on entering the jail of earthly justice, had been liberated from the dungeon of skepticism.

The Spanish critic, Blanco García,[2] has unjustly characterized Father Gil as a pious and stupid bore, who wavers between infidelity and religious faith for no apparent reason, just because the author so wills it. Blanco García, in spite of his religious investiture, could not see the deep spiritual significance of Father Norberto's incident and its inevitable influence upon a sensitive soul like that of Gil. Another Spanish critic,[3] in commenting on the suddenness of Gil's recovery of the faith he had lost, says that "Mr. Valdés either ignores or chooses to ignore that faith is a thing that cannot be recovered. As virginity, once lost, forever lost." But the critic here forgets, in the first place, that the novelist is dealing only with spiritual values,--unless the critic considers that

1. La Fe, end of chapter IX.
2. F. Blanco García: La Literatura Española en el Siglo XIX, 3 vols., Madrid, 1903.
3. F. Villegas: Critical study on La Fe, in España Moderna; Dec. 1891.

spiritual virginity is only a sort of sublimated physical virginity. Many things cannot be seen with the eyes of the flesh that can be divined with the inner eye of the spiritual self. In the second place, and this is important, Father Gil never regained the former faith, encumbered and deformed by a thousand dogmatic and theological half-truths. Not this puny credulity of ignorance, but that larger, infinitely deeper Faith of the idealist: this is the Faith that kept Gil unmoved and serene in the dark hour of misfortune and betrayal.

La Fe is a profoundly significant book. It is pervaded through and through with deep mysticism and suggestive truth. The author has presented in vivid and truthful colors the respective claims of skepticism, personified in D. Alvaro; of decrepit theology, incarnated in a a group of jealous and affeminate priests; and of mysticism, as differently interpreted in the simple-minded Norberto and the melancholy personality of Father Gil.

The characters above described are by no means all of Valdés's best. There are many others which are chiefly interesting for themselves rather than for their contrasting relation with other characters. José, for example, is an attractive type of the Spanish fisherman, simple-minded yet intelligent, honest, hard-working, affectionate and courageous, with just enough frailties to add to his picturesqueness. In Elisa, José's betrothed, Valdés portrays a lovely, gentle-hearted, timid maiden of simple habits and naïve religious devotion.

Another of Valdés's most interesting and fascinating characters is Miguel Rivera, the hero of Riverita and one of the principal characters of Maximina. With Miguel, the author identifies himself in many of his experiences and adventures. This character shows the novelist's skill in handling character growth. From the

days of early childhood through school and university days, leading finally to his marriage and its short-lived felicity, one follows the hero's fortunes with never-failing interest. Professor Morley aptly phrases it when he states that "no other character in all his work is drawn with such sympathy, and no other embodies that spirit of subtle satire against human futilities combined with deep reverence for the sacred things of life, which is the spirit of Valdés himself."[1] Miguel reappears, though not prominently, in El Origen del Pensamiento, as the generous friend and protector of Mario. In this novel Miguel passes as a gentle influence, radiating the melancholy rays of his wife's sweet memories.

The characters outlined in the preceding pages represent of course the more attractive phase of Valdés's characterizations. It is unnecessary to dwell upon his more pessimistic and tragic characters, such as are represented by the infamous women, Amalia and Obdulia, the prostitute Amparo, the proud and sensual Clementina, that veritable beast in human garb, the duke of Requena, the contemptible count of Quiñones, the weak-kneed count of Onís, and others. The very pity and contempt and horror that these characters inspire are the best testimonies to the artistic skill and effectiveness with which they are drawn. But, somehow, our author cannot help but being irresistibly drawn to exercise his highest artistry on his brighter creations, which are after all the genuine reflection of his own realistic idealism.

There are many lesser characters upon which Valdés has lavished all the wealth of his deep sympathy and his delicately ironic humor. Their secondary importance has not in the least deterred Valdés from drawing them as faithfully as his principal characters,

1. S. Griswold Morley: Novels of A. Palacio Valdés, in Poet Lore, 16: 92.

for he is constantly aware that if all characters, whatever their artistic hierarchy, are to be true re-creations from reality, they are all necessarily entitled to the best artistic treatment possible within the limits of their relative importance in the story. Characters are primary or secondary not because they are more or less real, but because they are more or less noticed; and whenever and wherever the less important characters are treated in fiction, they are never to be slighted precisely because it is in the interest of the former not to be slighted, for, when the lesser characters are judged as a whole, they always constitute the highly interesting fabric within which the principal characters live and move and have their being. That is why, in the words of Mr. Howells, "in a certain sense, there are no 'heroes' or 'heroines' in Valdés's novels, just as there are no such in real life."[1] "What you find in real life" he continues "is personalities who attract or repel, characters whose personal magnetism or whose peculiar circumstances or environement have helped to bring them to our foremost attention." "I have sometimes had difficulty" he goes on to say "in ascertaining which the protagonist in a certain story is. It is this quality which makes Valdés significant. His novels teem with the life of the ordinary world we live in, and his art is so spontaneous that the characters insinuate themselves in spite of the author himself, and in spite of whatever was the intention of the author at the start."[1]

It would not be just to say offhand that Valdés's men are artistically weaker than his women. A more conscientious study of the question leads one to the conclusion that Valdés's men are as true to reality as his women. Of course, if one's standard of what constitutes admirable masculine strength corresponds to the type of

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1. W. H. Howells: Criticism and Fiction.

man we call positive and agressive, Valdés is undoubtedly weaker than for instance, Pérez Galdós; but if one's ideal of a man is he who, according to Valdés's own standard, "unites masculine strength to the exquisite sensibility and tenderness of woman", then one must agree that Valdés's drawing of such men as Captain Ribot, Miguel Rivera, Reynoso, Father Gil, and the marquis of Peñalta, is as masterful as the description of his women.

Palacio Valdés is essentially a moderate. "Those who, like myself," he says "hate all excess, will never find favor with the public." He has generally succeeded in discovering the golden mean in every phase of his fiction--in character drawing, in argument, in composition, in style. Professor Showerman has very aptly dealt with this question of proportion in Valdés. "Measure" he says "is the key to the appreciation of Valdés."[1] He has neither the exclusiveness of Valera nor the dialect-laden language of Pereda; he is as free from the exaggerated humor of Dickens as from the bluntness of Pío Baroja. With one or two exceptions, his books are not lenghty, and they are readable. His love of characterization, however, leads him occasionally astray, thus endangering the general pleasing effect. The consensus of critical opinion makes La Espuma the target of adverse and even severe criticism. Some condemn the work for its decidedly naturalistic flavor; others for what they believe to be an exaggerated and unjustified attack against Madrid aristocracy. But everybody agrees that, on purely artistic grounds, La Espuma bears distinct marks of haste and careless construction. The only unity in it is that of atmosphere; but this is not enough to give it the power that only unity of action can give to fiction. The book is needlessly overburdened with a multiplicity of characters, nearly all

1. Op. cit., p. 7.

of which are frivolous and sordid in their refined selfishness. But this is not saying that they are artistically colorless, for Valdés could not help taking advantage of every opportunity to invest a character or a situation with his customary humor and sympathy. The essential fault of the book, then, is more of construction than of treatment. In portraying the sordid and unlovely aspects of life, our novelist is not at home. Instinctively despising meanness and hypocrisy, he could hardly bring himself up to his best mood when trying to translate his detestation into fiction.

Other novels which have been criticized on the score of unity are Riverita and Maximina. But these cases are essentially different from La Espuma. The principal characters in these novels are after Valdés's own heart. They are the points where converge all other subsidiary characters. For it is important to note that the innumerable episodes and scenes which the author introduces with no apparent unity, are eminently justified in so far as they serve to furnish the necessary material for the specific experiences and spiritual reactions of the protagonists. In other words, the many incidents are there to help the reader understand the development of the characters. The unity of Riverita and Maximina, therefore, is the natural unity of the epic. This unity once achieved, the fair critic has no right to ask for more.

Not all the novels of Palacio Valdés have unity of structure, but most of them must be credited with possessing that fundamental unity of action which only the faithful and accurate description of character can give. But he can achieve both unity of character and of construction once he sets out to do so. El Maestrante, Marta y María, El Idilio de un Enfermo, and especially La Alegría del Capitán Ribot, are conspicuous examples of that all-around unity.

Of La Alegría, a Spanish critic[1] declares that few works in literature are more perfect in structure; while Professor Morley characterizes it as "the fine flower of the achievement of Valdés."[2]

Palacio Valdés followed in practice his own principle that the tragic character of the dénouement should not be unnecessarily stressed. Even when the ending of a novel is specifically tragic, as in the cases of Maximina, El Cuarto Poder, and La Fe, there runs through them a dominant note of optimism which contributes effectively to mitigate the unpleasant impression produced by the death or the self-sacrifice of the favorite hero or heroine. Where the tragic note has been greatly, but not needlessly, emphasized is in El Maestrante. The effect after reading this book is one of the utmost depression and horror. The difference in the two degrees of tragic climax lies in the difference of the social background in the two cases. As in everything else, Palacio Valdés has exercised moderation in the character of his dénouements. So far as the climax itself is concerned, the proportion of novels which end happily is practically equal to that of the tragic novels. But if we are to discuss the works of Valdés on the general basis of pessimism versus optimism, most of them bear the unmistakable impress of the latter strain. It may be added that the high-water mark in optimistic dénouements is struck in La Alegría del Capitán Ribot. This is not an ending of the "happy-ever-after" variety. It transcends the merely Epicurean and reaches the serene heights of idealism. One closes the book with a heightened belief in the mere humanity of man.

The use of local color, that is, the description of nature and of social manners in Valdés's novels is, according to his

1. A. Graciano Martínez: Critical study on Valdés, on the occasion of the appearance of Tristán o el Pesimismo, in España y América, Jan. and Apr., 1906.
2. Op. cit., p. 77.

expressed attitude, entirely dependent upon his use of character. The importance of local color is derived only from the indicated interdependence existing between the individual and the physical and social environment in which he has been reared. Consistent with this principle, Valdés has never abused either description of nature or of social manners. At all times he has been scrupulously careful to make those elements the background of the picture of which the characters constitute the foreground. Ever mindful of the mysterious bond of union between character and surroundings, he often presents nature as a vital part of man's experience, as a projection of his moods and feelings. His nature pictures are not mere landscapes; they are, rather, plastic reproductions in which people breathe and move. The excursion to Nieva in Marta y María, Sanjurjo's visit to Marmolejo and his trip to Seville in La Hermana San Sulpicio, the visit of the duke of Requena and his aristocratic party to the quicksilver mines in La Espuma, the marine activities of the fisher folk in José, the romería in El Cuarto Poder, the visits of Captain Ribot to the beautiful country-sides and surroundings of the garden city of Valencia in La Alegría, and many other such scenes, furnish so many occasions for unforced, spontaneous, happy touches of nature description, which never last longer than the natural impression, nor go beyond the natural movement of the eye. As a result of this method, his nature descriptions are free from all affectation, delightfully fresh, and pregnant with artisitic feeling.

When we pass from the wide spaces and the outdoor life to the description of cities, streets, and houses, the author shows the same unfailing moderation, a moderation, however, which does not exclude the exuberant enthusiasm of the artist who sees poetry not only in the fields and in the mountains and their gorgeous horizons,

but also in the most prosaic of urban perspectives. Witness the wonderfully sympathetic description of Seville in all her fascinating aspects, in the daytime and at night, in the streets and in the houses, in the tobacco factory and by the river. The whole is a panorama of throbbing life and vivid color, painted with such freshness and such power as only a Galician reacting for the first time to the thousand inspirations of its novelty, could contemplate and enjoy.

And if we turn from description of exterior nature to that of social manners, we find in Valdés inexhaustible treasures of original observation. No aspect of Spanish life that is at all interesting has escaped his inquisitive pen. He depicts with equal force and vividness the native customs of Spanish fishing villages, the little rivalries between two neighboring provincial towns, the quaint good nature of a crowd listening at night to the singing of the favorite town maiden. He takes us also to a bullfight and acquaints us with its lore and its excitements; he introduces us also with easy familiarity to the homes of the poor, of the middle-class bourgeois, of the provincial noble, and the Madrid millionaire. Nor can we help listening with entrancing interest and amusement to the gossip of the "tertulia". Ah! The Spanish "tertulia", where reputations are made and unmade, where matrimonies are concerted, where love-making and love-breaking go on forever, where politics and literature are freely discussed, where the conservative and the liberal meet in complacent fraternity; in short, where most of the novels of Palacio Valdés find their most exquisite raison d'etre. For the "tertulia" is peculiarly a Spanish institution. It is the equivalen of the English "five-o'clock-tea" or the American "at home", but it is much more than that: it belongs as much to the poor as to the rich, and it may convene as much in the home as in the cafés. In short,

the "tertulia" is the universal center of Spanish family life.

By the very universality of the spirit which inspires it, the fiction of Palacio Valdés could not be regional alone, nor only national, nor merely international; it is all three combined, for even in his most distinctly local novels, as La Hermana San Sulpicio, Los Majos de Cádiz, and José, are found unmistakable traces of a humanity that is common to every race and country. The real secret of Valdés's popularity abroad is due to the fact that he interprets his native country in terms that the outsider can understand and appreciate. This is not true of most of his contemporary connationals, who usually interpret their country in terms comprehensive only to the Spaniard.

The old formula that style is the man fulfills itself completely in our novelist. Throughout his long literary career, even from early youth, when the temptation to affectation is usually strong, Valdés has never degenerated into artificiality. He may have been careless and unequal at times, but he has never been deliberately affected. He always showed pronounced dislike for what the Spaniards call lenguaje castizo, that is, classic language, in so far as this phrase serves to conceal a desire for pedantic display. In commenting upon La Fe, Professor Morley says that "it is an indication of the stylistic power of Valdés that he can write a novel full of philosophy and mysticism and yet carry the reader with him im ever-tightening grip so apart from the course of material events." He says further that "he possesses wonderful power of flexibility, passing easily and naturally from satirical description to earnest and sympathetic eloquence." His style is "always personal, bearing a constant undercurrent of the author's humor." He is "never ordinary, and one rightly fears to skip a page of description lest one miss some well-turned phrase or humorously acute observation. His pages glow with an inner

light which gives a poetic radiance to the commonest occurrences of life. This light is nothing else than a deep sympathy with nature in all her manifestations, in the acts of men as well as in the forests and rivers, a sensuous delight in existence for its own sake."[1] Valdés's "fascination does not lie in the photographic accuracy of the scene so much as in an indescribable spirit added to it, a spirit of sympathetic wholesomeness which pervades all his work." Professor Showerman says: "To read him even in English, with much of the aroma lost, is a rare pleasure..." "To read him in his own delightful tongue is to participate in the life of Spain, and to thal the infinitley wise Author of all pleasures for the Tower of Babel and the accident of foreign language."[2] Mr. Howells assures us that Valdés possesses "a style whose charm makes itself felt through the shadows of a strange speech." I have purposely quoted these distinguished American critics because their unbiased opinion is highly significant of the inherent spiritual qualities of Valdés's style.

The supreme quality of the style of Valdés is humor. The Spanish critic, González-Blanco, classes him as the chief of the humoristic school of modern Spanish fiction. We may speak of Valdés's humor just as we speak of the humor of Dickens, or that of Mark Twain. "Humor" says the American critic, Mr. Baxter, "is one of the foremost attributes of Spanish literature, and Valdés has his full share of it. His work is saturated with it, and it is of a rich, delicious, sympathetic sort, that somehow seems strikingly akin to the humor which we know as distinctively American,--perhaps more akin than the humor of any other nationality, not even excepting that of our brothers, the English."[3] In Valdés, the humorous note lends to every page of his works a note of engaging familiarity which is intimately and delight-

1. Op. cit., p. 77.
2. Op. cit., p. 7.
3. Op. cit., p. 7.

fully communicative. Thanks to this quality, many a long description which otherwise might gladly be passed over, is read with a pleasure which abundantly indemnifies us for its lack of dramatic movement. The reader soon learns to expect pleasure after pleasure as the pages multiply without taking the least notice of it. It is this quality which brightens the most ordinary incidents and characters with an indefinible glow of poetic feeling.

We pass now to a summary review of the works of Valdés, especially those which have been touched upon.

Valdés's first novel, El Señorito Octavio, is characterized by the author himself as exaggerated and infantile. Yet it shows maturity of conception and mastery of technique. More than a promise, this novel already shows those distinctive qualities of description and characterization which never left him in his later productions. The scene is laid in Segada, a fictitious name for the author's native town, Entralgo. It is a pathetic story of balked love, in which the sensual and pleasure-seeking type of nobleman comes in for a good deal of satiric treatment. To Professor Showerman, even the sensational ending of this novel is outcome of "a perfectly natural sequence of events." The same critic considers El Idilio de un Enfermo "the simplest and not the least charming of all of Valdés's novels."[1] The story is that of a young man who, having injured his health by dissipated living in Madrid, goes to a remote village to recover. Here he comes in contact with a village girl, Rosa, with whom he falls in love. The situation gives rise to a charming romance in which Valdés displays to advantage his usual qualities of humorous description. Leopoldo Alas,[2] however, thinks that the author has not given full scope to the development of the characters.

1. Op. cit., p. 8.
2. A. González-Blanco: Historia de la Novela en España. Madrid, 1909.

In Aguas Fuertes Valdés has collected short stories of charming simplicity and overflowing humor. Among the the best may be mentioned Solo, full of the tenderest pathos; it "contains" says Professor Showerman "one of the finest little boys of four years I have ever met in fiction." Seducción is a story frivolous and charming, while Los Puritanos shows a delicately sentimental strain. These stories are sympathetic studies of modest personages in which acuteness of observation in the most insignificant details of life is constantly bathed in the richest humor.

As a novel of entertainment, La Hermana San Sulpicio is ideal: it is vividly interesting and it ends happily. Everything in it spells humor of the most human sort. No happier selection could the author have made in giving us the best of his humor than the vivacious young woman of sunny Seville, who is chafing under the austere impressments of conventual discipline. The more shadowy side of Andalusian manners is depicted in Los Majos de Cádiz, in which Valdés gives also full play to his humor. In the story are narrated the amorous vicissitudes of the most arrogant, handsome and elegant of the majos. The character of the country and the people described afford opportunity for a melodramatic treatment which the author handles with his usaul skill.

El Maestrante is a story of horror not exempt from a certain vein of grim humor which helps to intensify the tragic effect. The insane jealousy of a woman goes as far as to avenge her lover's tiring of her in her own little daughter, subjecting her to a martyrdom that is sickening. In this novel Valdés shows that he can concentrate upon the main action of the story without letting minor situations obtrude too much into its swift, straightforward development. La Alegría del Capitán Ribot may be compared to La Hermana San Sulpi-

cio in that both use the autobiographic style of narration. The advantage of this method lies in that it helps the reader to identify himself more closely with the hero's experiences, thus adding greatly to the interest of the action. La Alegría is full of the same idyllic movement as La Hermana, is equally interesting, and is superior to the latter in construction and in the idealistic character of the ending.

After Valdés has made his realism secure, he decided to give himself a temporary respite in which he might give novelistic expression to the melancholy broodings of his childhood days. The result was La Aldea Perdida, a symbolic novel which sings the swan song of the passing of the simple and joyous life of a Cantabrian village, with the introduction of modern industry. The principal characters are Demetria, a village girl, and Pluto, a miner who has come to work the mines. Pluto falls in love with Demetria, but not being able to seduce her, he kills her. Demetria represents the earth, personified in the ancient goddess of agriculture; while Pluto is the somber Hades, lord of the underworld, who kills civilization. The book is full of lyric sentiment, unfortunately wasted on a theme of little appeal to modern-minded readers.

Not the least interesting and pleasing of Palacio Valdés's books is Los Papeles del Doctor Angélico. The author describes it as a compilation of the papers left him, at his death, by a university classmate of his, Dr. Angel Jiménez, whom his friends affectionately surnamed "el doctor Angélico". "The work" says Valdés "has not been one of interpretation only, but also of arrangement." Whether the book is entirely his own work, or partly so, the fact is that very much of it betrays his own well-known style and ideas. The device of inventing a fictitious name to enable the author to express his

ideas with more freedom is not new. The classcical model of this plan is Carlyle's Sartor Resartus. Both the characteristic philosophy and stylistic qualities of Valdés are distinctly recognizable in many of the sories and sketches. The book is characterized by Mr. Howells as "very native, very characteristic, and very poignant, as well as wise, tender, and moving." One of the most charming of the sketches is Intelligencia y Amor, in which the same poet Rojas of Tristán o el Pesimismo is the protagonist. Its theme is that in order to understand we must first love. El Gobierno de las Mujeres is another interesting discussion, in dramatic setting, between a talented woman and her "tertulios". She gives original ideas on the position of women in society, maintaining that they should be entirely entrusted with politics and government, because government is based on conduct, and women are superior to men in matters of conduct. There are many other little essays, tales and sketches, some humorous, others philosophical, but all couched in the same sympathetic and fluid style that we have learned to admire in the author's novels.

V

CONCLUSION

There is a tendency to judge the works of a writer by individual books, and if the latest volume happens to produce a strong impression in one direction or another, critics are apt to forget his earlier productions no matter how rich and varied they may have been. Palacio Valdés has not been immune from this superficial handling of criticism. When such books as La Espuma and La Fe appeared, critics flew off at the tangent of last impressions and, forgetting such earlier masterpieces as Marta y María, Riverita, Maximina, and La Hermana San Sulpicio, set about branding Palacio Valdés as a confirmed and almost incorrigible naturalist of the worst type. In order rightly and justly to appraise a writer we must judge him by the dominant tendency discernible, not in one or two works, but in all his productions as a whole. And if we are to judge Palacio Valdés by this method, his literary complexion will be found to be much more difficult and hazardous to determine than the self-sufficiency of most critics would lead one to suppose.

It is safe to say, broadly, that Palacio Valdés is a realist. I say broadly advisedly because I am not thinking of realism as necessarily a school in any narrow sense. Realism, in its broadest acceptation, is a point of view, an attitude of mind towards life as men conceive it at any given time. Life is a complex and a manifold thing. Sometimes it reveals itself to the artist as a thing of beauty to behold in beatific contemplation; at other times life takes on a gloomy aspect; now it reveals itself in all its repulsive nakedness; now we discover in it new elements of truth and beauty. But underneath this infinite variety the stream of life flows on unperturbed by human moods and human temporary obstructions.

Now this is the life that Palacio Valdés has depicted with such keen penetration and consummate artistry. When a certain part of nature revealed itself in its darkest aspects, he produced La Espuma and El Maestrante, to say nothing of the pessimistic portions of many of his other works. When he was struck by the novelty of another part of nature, he wrote La Hermana San Sulpicio, Los Majos de Cádiz, and José. When he saw that many writers were libelling nature by their incessant stressing of vice and corruption, he wrote Maximina and La Alegría del Capitán Ribot, in order to show that nature still holds in her bosom virtues and beauties untold for those who have eyes to see. When he became disgusted with the exaggerations and distortions with which a misguided fanaticism disfigured love, he wrote Marta y María. When he desired to clothe his philosophy of life in the garb of fiction, he wrote La Fe. And, finally, when he desired to show his contempt for the pedantic self-sufficiency of science, he produced El Origen del Pensamiento. Nor did he stop here: he wanted to have his day-dream of the sweet by-gone days of his childhood life, and La Aldea Perdida was the result. Valdés, then, is a realist, a naturalist, a romanticist, a symbolist, anything you will, if you have in mind definite schools of literary expression. But whatever he may be in this narrow sense, he portrays life all the time and in all its aspects; in other words, he takes the true realistic attitude and no other. To sum up, Palacio Valdés is a man of many moods, but of one single attitude: his is a realistic idealism.

The novels of Palacio Valdés are not all entertainment just as life itself is not all entertainment. For those who think, life is primarily a lesson. Valdès's fiction, being a true expression of life, is also a lesson. But this is not saying that it is didactic, for one of the outstanding qualities of his novels is that he

never lets his personal ideas obtrude too much into the natural development of the action. He treats all questions which are likely to stimulate thought: theology, philosophy, science, politics, religion, love. Yet not once has he expressed a personal opinion on any of these topics. And it is precisely because of this impersonality and objectivity that the different conclusions derived from his fiction are all the more effective and compelling.

Consciously or unconsciously, Palacio Valdés, with true realistic insight, has inspired himself in that eternal contrast of life: the ideal and the practical. It is the theme which inspired the immortal Cervantes to write the inimitable Don Quixote; it is the same theme which inspired the genius of Shakespeare to give to the world so many contrasting passions; it is the same theme of Moliere and of Dickens, and of so many other immortal names in the world's literature. Not always has Valdés presented these two aspects of life in the same form. The ideal sometimes takes on an exaggerated aspect, as in María;[1] at other times it partakes of mysticism, as in Father Gil;[2] at still other times it is of the very essence of humanity, as in Maximina[3] and in Captain Ribot; and, finally, it expresses itself under a mild form, as in the impractical innocence of Emilio Martí.[4] The practical also assumes diverse aspects, and it is personified in the lovely humaneness of Marta,[1] in the passionate hysteria of Obdulia,[2] in the engaging bonhomie of Miguel Rivera[5] and the cold cynicism of Castell.[4] These constitute only some of the most striking examples. Many other characters come and go in Valdés's novels, showing now this,

1. Marta y María.
2. La Fe.
3. Maximina.
4. La Alegría del Capitán Ribot.
5. Riverita and Maximina.

now that aspect of the two tendencies.

Palacio Valdés has been more widely translated than any other contemporary Spanish writer. His works are to be found in French, in English, in German, in Dutch, in Portuguese, in Swedish, in Russian, and in Bohemian. He has been best appreciated in England and in America, where such distinguished critics as Edmond Gosse, William Dean Howells, Sylvester Baxter, and Professors S. G. Morley and Grant Showerman have accorded him much well-merited praise. "We may grant" says the last-mentioned critic "that he is not to be ranked with the world's greatest geniuses in the novel--with a Thackeray or a Balzac; yet there are qualities in which it would be hard to find any novelist equalling him, to say nothing of surpassing. For keenness of observation, for the artistic instinct of selection, for truth to nature and freedom from the imrpobable, for measure in every one of his literary manifestations, it is not too much to say that no novelist in Spain or anywhere else has written a half dozen novels that surpass the half dozen best of his pen."[1] While Valdés has not been as prolific as other well-known writers of Spain, it is safe to say that he has produced more real masterpieces than any other contemporary novelist.

To sum up, Armando Palacio Valdés is a realist because he sees the truth of life; he is an idealist because he sees the good of life; and he is an artist because he sees the beauty of life. He is a great novelist because he has known how to combine and harmonize those elements in characters that shall live and endure as long as the true, the beautiful and the good shall live and endure. Palacio Valdés belongs not merely to Spain; he belongs to the world.

1. Op. cit., p. 8.

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Review: José, in Book Buyer, 24:242.

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F. Vézinet: Les maitres du roman espagnol contemporain. Paris, 1907.

II. DOMESTIC CRITICISM.

Rafael Altamira: Bibliografía española en el extranjero. La España Moderna. Madrid, Feb. 1889. Altamira mentions his article, Clarín y Palacio Valdés en Italia, published, as he sates, in La Justicia. He also refers to a critical study of the Italian, Mr. Cesareo, about those two authors. He further mentions his article, A propósito de la literatura española en Francia, also published in La Justicia. In the same article, Altamira announces a future article on the women of Palacio Valdés, especially married women. None of these were obtainable.

El Padre Francisco Blanco García: La Literatura Española en el Siglo XIX, 3 vols. Madrid, 1903; in vol. 2, pp. 538-542, 611.

E. Gómez de Baquero: Critical study on La Aldea Perdida, in La España Moderna, Madrid, Jun. 1903; pp. 164-168.

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Andrés González-Blanco: Historia de la Novela en España, desde el romanticismo a nuestros días. Madrid, 1909; pp. 511-535.

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J. Ixart: La Hermana San Sulpicio. La España Moderna. Madrid, June, 1889; pp. 161-171.

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José León Pagano: Al través de la España literaria, 2 vols., 3d edition. Barcelona, 1915; pp. 131-140.

Emilia Pardo Bazán: Critical study on La Espuma, in Nuevo Teatro Crítico, Madrid, Feb., 1891.

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C. TRANSLATIONS OF ARMANDO PALACIO VALDÉS.

Marta y María. -- French, by Mme. Devismes de Saint-Maurice. Published in Le Monde Moderne.
English, by Haskell Dole, New York.
Russian, by M. Pawlosky. Published in the Diario de San Petersburgo.
Swedish, by A. Hillman, Stockholm.
Tcheque, by O. S. Vetti, Praga.

El Idilio de un Enfermo. -- French, by Albert Savine. Published in Les Heures du Salon et de l'Atelier.
Bohemian, by M. A. Pikhart, Praga.

Aguas Fuertes. -- Most of the stories have been translated and published by L'Independence Belge, Le Journal de Genevre, El Correo de Hannover, Hlas Naroda, Lumir, and other journals.

José. -- French, by Mlle. Sara Oquendo. Published in the Revue de la Mode, Paris.
English, by Cl Smith, New York.
German, translated and published in Interhaltungs-Beilage.
Dutch, by M. Hora Adema. Published in Het Nienws van den Dag, Amsterdam.
Bohemian, by A. Pikhart, Praga.
Swedish, by A. Hillman. Stockholm.
Portuguese, by Cunha e Costa. Published in Revista da Semana. Rio Janeiro.

Riverita. -- French, by Julien Lugol. Published in La Revue Internationale.

Maximina. -- English, by Haskell Dole. New York.

El Cuarto Poder. -- French, by B. d'Étroyat. Published in Le Temps.
English, by Miss Rachel Challice. New York and London.
Dutch, by M. Hora Adema. Amsterdam.

La Hermana San Sulpicio. -- French, by Mme. Huc, with preface by Emile Faguet. Paris.
English, by Haskell Dole. New York.
Dutch, published in El Correo de Rotterdam.
Swedish, by A. Hillman. Stockholm.

La Espuma. -- English, by Clara Bell. London.

La Fe. -- French, by Jules Laborde. Paris.
English, by I Hapgood. New York.
German, by Albert Cronan. Leipzig.

El Maestrante. -- French, by J. Gaure, with a preliminary study by L. Bordes. Paris
English, by Miss Rachel Challice. London.

El Origen del Pensamiento. -- French, by M. Dax Delime. Published in La Revue Britannique.
English, by I. Hapgood. Published in The Cosmopolitan, with illustration by Cabrinety.

Los Majos de Cádiz. -- Dutch, by Mary Hora Adema. Amsterdam.

La Alegría del Capitán Ribot. -- French, by C. du Val Asselin. Paris.
English, by Minna C. Smith. New York.
Dutch, by A. Fokker. Amsterdam.

Tristán o el Pesimismo. -- English. Published in Transatlantic Tales, vol. XXXII, New York.

Papeles del Doctor Angélico. -- German, by Franz Hausmann. Published in Der Dar (The Eagle).

NOTE 1: The dates of the works of Palacio Valdés correspond, in every case, to the original editions published in Madrid by Manuel G. Hernández or their successors, Librería General de Victoriano Suárez. The latter have published, beginning in 1894, a new library edition, in eighteen volumes, of the complete works of Palacio Valdés.

2: In addition to the above-recorded bibliographical references, all the standard encyclopaedias may be consulted for brief articles of general information.